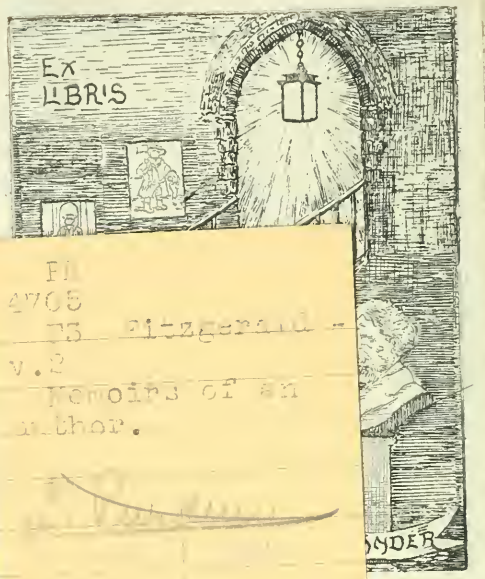

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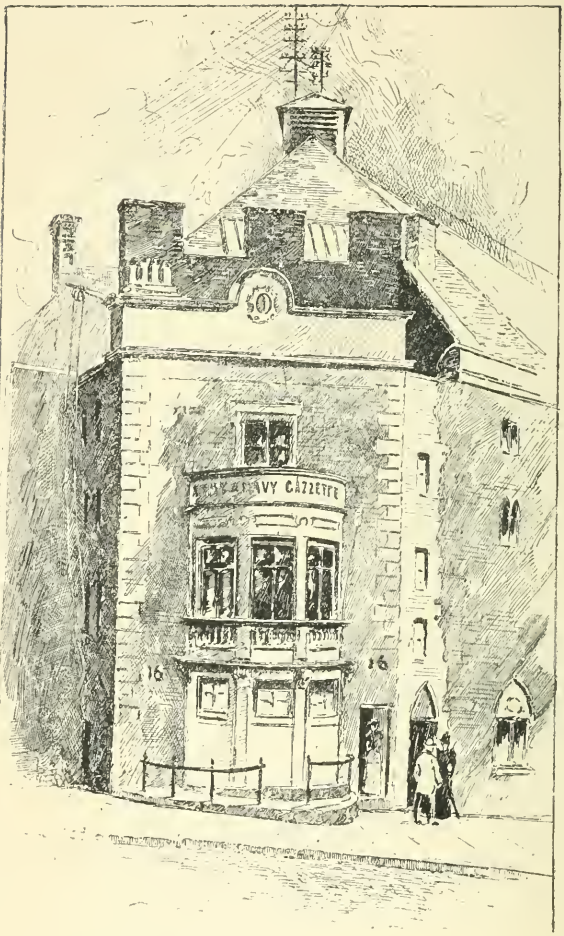
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MEMOIRS OF AN AUTHOR

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF 'RECREATIONS OF A LITERARY MAN,' 'THE BOOK FANCIER,' 'THE ART OF THE STAGE,' ETC.

'Vita sine literis, mors'

'Your glass may be small, but drink out of your own glass'
DE MUSSET

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

BOOK I.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER XIII.

DRAMATISTS: DION BOUCICAULT—BYRON—WILLS—PALGRAVE SIMPSON—WINGFIELD—SIR C. YOUNG.

PAGE

Dion Boucicault—Grotesque Performance of his 'Colleen Bawn'—George Macdonald and his 'Pilgrim's Progress'—Henry Byron—His Characteristic Letter—Tom Taylor—'Tumtaler'—W. G. Wills and his Career—Palgrave Simpson—Bronchial Interruptions—Dr. Cox—Lewis Wingfield—Frank Marshall—'Burning the Candle at both Ends'—Dr. Strauss the 'Old Bohemian'—Sir Charles Young—Sir Percy Shelley and his Theatres—'Jim the Penman' - 1—54

CHAPTER XIV.

MEYERBEER—WAGNER—LISZT.

Meyerbeer at Spa—Liszt—The Gain of being Musical—Wagner - - - - - - 55—74

CHAPTER XV.

VARIOUS PERSONAGES.

The Yelverton Case—Whiteside—The Counts D'Albanie—Count de Jarnac—Prince Lucien Bonaparte—Funeral at Chislehurst - - - - 75—100

BOOK II.

THE LITERARY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE ART OF WRITING.

PAGE

The Way to Write—Style 'gone out'—How to learn to Write—The Real Writing-man—Zola's System—'The Gates of the World'—Should the Story or the Characters be first conceived?—Illustration from 'Jane Eyre'—Position of the Writer in reference to his Story—Should one Write Fast or Slow?—'Clarissa Harlowe' a terribly Real Book—Writing Idiosyncrasies—Rewriting—Division into Chapters—A Story writing itself—Periods of Stagnation—'Once begun, Half is done'—Influence of Names on Writing 103—141

CHAPTER II.

STYLE, OLD AND NEW.

Prevalence of 'Realism'—The Newspaper Style adapted to Serious Literature—Dickens's Style out of Fashion—The Old System of Publication in 'Numbers'—The Essay peculiar to Dickens—His Imitators, or 'Dickens and Water'—'Guy Livingstone,' Miss Braddon, and Mrs. Henry Wood—The 'Old Style' of Novel—Present Dearth of Humour—Deficiency of the Scotch in Humour—Burnand and Arthur à Becket—Anstey and Jerome—Ephemeral Jests—'Dame Europa,' etc.—Rapid Decay of Literary Reputations—'To have done, is to hang quite out of fashion' - - - - - - 142—182

CHAPTER III.

THE AMATEURS—'GETTING INTO PRINT.'

PAGE
Amateur Writing—Devices for 'Getting into Print'—Scriblerus and Priscilla—The Writing 'Father o' Family'—Orthodox Methods for 'Getting into Print'—'Does Writing Pay?' - - - 183—206

CHAPTER IV.

LITERARY STRUGGLES AND EXPERIENCES.

The Author's own Experiences—Introduced to Writing by Mr. John Forster—General Hamley—Mr. Bentley's Liberal Encouragement—'Never Forgotten'—'Fatal Zero'—Rebuke by Dickens—Hardness of the Struggle—Advantages of being 'On the Spot'—Trip to Homburg as 'Special' - - - 207—259

CHAPTER V.

LECTURING.

Lectures and Lecturing—*Agrémens* and Difficulties—The 'Writing Man's' Enjoyment of Reading—Books that bear Reperusal—*Réclame* and Self-advertisement—Signed Articles - - - - 260—277

CHAPTER VI.

WHIMS AND HUMOURS OF THE WRITING LIFE.

An Elaborate Hoax—The Income Tax Officials and the Author—A Race with the Printing Office—Inconvenience of 'Posted Proofs'—A Young Impostor—'A Day's Tour'—Tour to 'discover the Source of the New River'—Odd Sensation of hearing one's Name on the Stage—Magazine Dinners—'The Dramatic Students'—The Playgoers' Club - 278—308

CHAPTER VII.

LETTERS.

PAGE

Cordial Letters from Strangers—Mr. Churton Collins—A Dutchman's Quaint Letter—An Ingenious Device—'Sheridan in Barrel'—Should Letters be kept or destroyed? - - - - - - 309—328

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ART OF OBSERVING.

Object Lesson from 'Seeing Antwerp'—Romance of Calais—'Old Dessin's'—Interview with Madame Dessin - - - - - - 329—341

CHAPTER IX.

LEAVES FROM MY DIARY.

Specimens from a Diary—'The Merchant of Venice'—Scene at a Music-hall—Frenchmen at the Tower—The King of Saxony at Chapel—Living at a Café—The Mad Englishman—Stepping-stones—Suicides—Proposal to write a Guide Book—Grotesque Incident at a Ball - - - - - - 342—397

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR'S WRITINGS - 398—408

MEMOIRS OF AN AUTHOR

BOOK I.

(*Continued.*)

REMINISCENCES OF THE LITERARY WORLD.

CHAPTER XIII.

DRAMATISTS : DION BOUCICAULT—BYRON—WILLS—PALGRAVE SIMPSON—WINGFIELD—SIR C. YOUNG.

Once, in Dublin, I was invited to a party given on a rather eccentric principle. It was to commence with a lunch at two ; there was a concert, conversation, and tea to follow, until dinner was reached. This was, as may be imagined, a serious original business, for there were a large number of persons to be provided for. After the dinner there was a dance. The hostess was Mrs. Parnell, mother of the uncrowned King—an agreeable American lady with handsome daughters. It was here that I met Mr. Dion Boucicault, who was at the height of his reputation as the author of the charming 'Colleen Bawn.' He was then an interesting, and even brilliant, man, and greatly followed by the public gaze, for he was assumed to be safe and clever, shrewd and far-seeing. With him was his

charming wife, the original attractive 'Colleen Bawn' of the scarlet cloak. They were a happy and affectionate pair, and she seemed to have great pride in her husband's gifts. How, in this case, as in so many others, came a disastrous change, is well known. In his dramatic work Boucicault had a firm, unerring touch. He was a most accomplished playwright. The 'Colleen Bawn' is a masterpiece of dramatic conception and effect, though all its materials — the kindly, humorous Irish priest, the local villain, the good-natured Englishman, won over by the virtues of the peasant—have been used and reproduced *ad nauseam*. The blue gauze screens that formed the water in the water-cave were then thought a triumph of illusion. Scene painters would now smile at such devices. Enormous sums were made by this piece, but, as usual, with but little effect on the fortunes of the author.*

At this time he was on the point of bringing

* It would seem, indeed, that all such streams of luck bring consequent impoverishment. It is said that £20,000 has been made by the 'Private Secretary'; and other vast sums were brought by 'Our Boys' and 'Our American Cousin.' Yet neither Mr. Hawtrey, nor Boucicault, Buckstone, nor James and Thorne seem to have much benefited by these Pactolean streams.

out, at the old Theatre Royal, Dublin, his second Irish drama 'Arrah na Pogue'; and it was extraordinary what pains he took, and what sagacity he showed, in the preparation. I was present at the first performance. It was an altogether different piece from what it afterwards became. There was a last act, in which there was an Irish duel, in a room, where the faithful Shaun is so carried away by his excitement as to stand behind his master, regardless of the opponent's pistol which 'covered' him, and eagerly direct his aim. Meeting him on the next day, and congratulating him, he entered gravely on a discussion of the subject. To my surprise, he quietly pointed out that the last act 'would never do,' and must come out altogether. The rest must be rewritten, the interest concentrated. He was glad that he had made the experiment, as it gave him the opportunity of removing such defects. This was an instructive lesson in the craft. Accordingly, when it was reproduced in London, I could scarcely recognise it.*

* It was in this piece, I think, that he 'conveyed' from a French drama, 'L'Officier de Fortune,' which I saw in Paris, the device of the 'moving walls,' which revolved, or 'turned inside out,' to help the idea of motion, a prisoner

After these striking successes, Boucicault wrote a vast number of other plays, which made less and less impression. He became a general manufacturer, adapter, and dealer in such wares. I remember one of his last appearances, when he arrived in town, after a long and troubled absence in America, with a piece called 'The O'Dowd,' in which he played the leading part. He had grown very stout and old, his racy humour was gone, and with it all his stage-craft. His Irish jokes fell flat, but he was received with good-natured toleration, as being an old favourite.

The name of Boucicault recalls to me a quaintly grotesque performance of his 'Colleen Bawn' which I once witnessed in the good old city of Dublin. In one of its old streets, not far from Swift's Cathedral, was a long abandoned ruin of a theatre, on which I used to look with much interest, for it was the very building in which—in the year 1741—the 'Messiah' had been first performed,

being pursued, and climbing over these barriers one after the other. Such artifices are clumsy enough, and suggest no more than what they actually present, viz., practicable screens in motion. The spectator is assuredly not beguiled into thinking that it is only the figure that is moving. It was the same with the other 'truc' of the piece, the scaling of the tower, which descended, to convey the notion of the man's climbing.

'Mr. Handel' himself conducting.* This was certainly the oldest theatre in the kingdom. One day passing by, I saw posters affixed to the walls, and persons entering the stage-door. The old house had come to life again. At night I went to see the performance, securing a seat in a private box for one shilling, 'with access to the stage.' It was a strange old place, with a saloon still adorned with faded gilding, all green with damp, the plaster peeling off. This was called 'the Grove Room.'

Seated in my private box—which was so far from being private that there were three other persons occupying it—I found that we were well on in the fortunes of the ill-fated Eily. I looked round the house, and found it crammed to the ceiling. I could make out the old rococo shape, the remains of fossilized pilasters, and mouldering bits of florid stucco, which helped me back to the magnificence of a hundred and fifty years ago, when 'Mr. Handel' was sitting down below me, there where the four fiddlers were now, 'thrumming'

* There is also another curious theatrical relic on one of the quays just in front of St. Michael and St. John's Chapel—a piece of the wall of the old Smock Alley Theatre, where Garrick performed a century and a half ago.

away at his harpsichord, of which I had actually a fragment before me. The Lord-Lieutenant and his court were all crowded together where the ragamuffins were, and where Mr. Dubourg was leading off his fiddlers to the 'Hallelujah Chorus,' then heard for the first time.

Meanwhile Myles, who is arrayed in a painter's cap and in his shirt-sleeves, has just got 'into hoults' with Hardress Cregan, and, flinging the painter's cap upon the ground, is advancing on that gentleman, desiring to know 'would ye make hur yer misthriss?' He is about to deliver the well-known burst about his (Myles's) retaining the 'old spark of virtue,' notwithstanding the temptation his peculiar course of life has exposed him to—I say at this crisis he is encouraged by cries of 'Give it to him!' 'Hit him, Myles!' and I sympathize with that honest actor (Mr. Farrell, I think) when he stops and silences the unruly throng with a look of scorn and anger. At the same time, I cannot but admire his readiness, for when encored unreasonably over and over again in that 'Cruiskeen Lawn' (from motives of pure selfishness in the audience, who only want to encore themselves), with singular tact he substitutes for the last verse, 'And when grim death

appears,' etc., which even I was growing a little weary of, some lines to this effect :

'And when your hearts are sore,
Ye need but look before,
And come here when ye can-an-an ;
Here MALACHY you'll find,
And FARRELL'S not behind,'
(Pointing to his own waistcoat)
'With the heart of a thrue Ire-rish man, man, man !
The heart of a thrue Ire-rish MAN !'

But we are now drawing on to the water-cave, the most exciting incident of the whole.

It came on me like a surprise. I was not prepared for such realism. As the scene drew aside, to my astonishment and delight I found the stage three-quarters covered with a dark, gloomy, *real* pool. The necessities of the scene had indeed compelled a slight concession to some of the popular conventionalities ; for the margin of the pool had to be masked by a canvas bank, and, similarly, the approaches at each side, where the hill leads down to the edge of the water, were lined with profile declivities. This fiction was unavoidable. But there below us was the *real* water—cold, still, deep, impenetrable, and looking perfectly black, Stygian, and uncomfortable. I joined cordially in the praise given in

the bill to the author of this arrangement, where it is stated that 'the tank was under the arrangement of Mr. Malone.'

Hush! they come at last. More realism. A real punt, with Danny Mann and the Colleen—ah, in her old red cloak!—on board. It will be recollected that Danny, in order to stifle the sense of the crime he is about to commit, has almost stupefied himself with liquor; and it seems to me, from a certain unsteadiness in the management of the punt, that the conscientious actor has been 'priming' himself only too well. Onward they move over the dark waters, amid the cheers of the audience; but the punt is ill trimmed and ill managed, and rocks fearfully, and just as they touch the centre rock, Danny falls overboard, and the Colleen is prematurely submerged up to her middle. With infinite presence of mind Danny rights the punt, has clambered on board, and landed the Colleen Bawn on the rock. I am ashamed to say that indecent laughter greets this casualty.

Now comes the well-known murder of the girl; and, having a commanding position, I see that a sort of dry wooden cell, or caisson, has been contrived next the rock, into which the poor

struggling thing is plunged—another concession to old prejudices, or, rather, to the Colleen's own private feelings, who for no consideration of salary could be induced to consent to realistic immersion. And I can make all allowance, seeing a wasted-looking neck over the red cloak, with a very spare figure, and something like a consumptive chest, and I can very well excuse Miss Lydia Rooney. But Myles is at hand on the canvas bank, swings himself over by the rope —but mark how different the effect of swinging across *real water* instead of across 'some ribbons of blue muslin,' as Malachy puts it, for here is the *sense of danger:* he sees that otter we all know of, and fires his—pistol in this case. It misses.

Then comes the 'header'—mark you, a *true* header. Nothing finer could be conceived—a splash of water that goes up to the ceiling. Even the very noise is satisfactory, for we always missed *that* in the *other* performance. Myles is an accomplished swimmer. For we can all see him paddling about; and not content with these exertions in the holy cause of rescuing the drowning, he comes out, and 'goes in' again with yet another plunge. But it is a cold night, and the spectacle becomes really almost as heroic

as the original philanthropy, for both are done in the cause of duty. At last he gets near to the dry caisson, out of which he draws the hapless Eily, raising her to the surface, and he gasping and leaning on the rock for support in the traditional way. Poor Eily! She has her wet probation in the cause of duty also, and not the least unpleasant portion must be that damp embrace.

Talking the matter over with Malachy afterwards, and I need hardly say congratulating him on his exertions, he tells me the difficulties he had to encounter were most dispiriting. The construction of 'the tank,' even with the aid of Malone, was almost disheartening. The water *would* come through; and for a long time there was a steady ooze which defied discovery, until it was found that the pit was rapidly becoming an unreclaimed bog. This element, however, was baffled—perhaps by the ingenuity of Malone. He bore generous testimony to the 'willingness' of Myles, who was ready on any night, no matter what the weather. Even on a chill March day, when everyone was enjoying his skating, this devoted gentleman went through his duty as usual; but the performances had to be suspended,

owing to Myles, not unnaturally, contracting a rheumatic fever.

Such was the droll exhibition. By-and-by Myles and his tank disappeared—possibly he died of 'the rheumatics.' Not long after the place was taken by a firm of agricultural implement makers, who absorbed it into their new premises. But I dare say the ghost of Handel still haunts it.

This suggests a whimsical exhibition, which, as I recall it, always brings a smile. That gifted poet, George Macdonald, full of a sort of religious fervour, once conceived the notion of presenting an all but ideal performance of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' With an earnest, enthusiastic instinct, he cast the more striking scenes into the form of a sacred drama, and took the concert-room at the Steinway Hall. The characters were sustained by himself and his family.

It was produced on the most economic lines. There were some rudely painted screens and scenes. There was something almost pathetic in the performance, from the earnestness which all concerned threw into their work. Friends, it would seem, had been enrolled, and sustained minor characters. The chief part was taken by the poet himself, whose tall gaunt figure suited

it. But there was something grotesque in the 'broad Scotch' accent with which he declaimed his lines. The whole burden was on *him*. His children supported him with spirit, and there was a genial elderly lady, who sat on a chair in a smiling, modest way, but who said little or nothing. Towards the close he came in arrayed in glittering armour and clattering loudly, when he seemed full of a sort of inspiration. Though tempted occasionally into a smile, it was impossible to feel irreverence, the whole was so genuine and simple, and so homely. A slender audience listened patiently to the end.

I knew a little of that brilliant man, Henry Byron, whose name was as prominent in his day as Mr. Gilbert's is now. A play by Byron verily brought fortune to a theatre. His pieces were always interesting, neat, workmanlike productions; the characters pleasant and amusing, without being extravagant or farcical. This, I think, is an exact description of his pieces. It is something to have written what must be considered the most successful piece of the century, namely, 'Our Boys.'* No one now seems to have his

* It was revived lately, and though there were traces of old fashion, David James's 'Butterman' was as fresh and striking as ever. It was an admirable performance.

ready touch and fancy, owing to the curious situation that now obtains. The production of a single play now becomes a serious venture, owing to the vast outlay entailed. Very often the fate of the theatre and of its actor-manager depends upon it. In Byron's and Tom Taylor's day matters were not so critical as this. A new play was not exactly an event for the town to discuss. I fancy, therefore, the authors wrote with more confidence and freedom.

Byron was a lively, brilliant creature, and a wit ; his *mots* were constantly circulating. He was both a dramatist and an actor. I remember his curious departure in this latter direction at the Strand Theatre, where he played in one of his own pieces as Sir Simon Simple. It was a poorish performance, very slow and lugubrious, intended to be comic ; and though for a time he continued on the stage, and played other characters of his own, he never became an effective performer.

Byron, in his numerous plays, certainly showed extraordinary gifts. They were, as I said, always clear, pleasant, and interesting. He always exhibited that unmistakable 'note' of art, the looking to the end, with the assumption that the

means are only secondary. In our own day, in every department of art, writing, painting, drama-acting, the stress is laid on the means rather than on the end, of which the means are merely a matter of experience. He was good-natured and good-humoured, and likeable too.

I had written a novel for Mr. Bentley, called 'Beauty Talbot.' Every writer occasionally produces a work of which he thinks rather highly, from having written with pleasure and enthusiasm, with the idea that it ought to be successful. This is a feeling altogether different from a vain satisfaction or self-complacency. It is akin to the honest pride with which a workman receives credit for having finished a good and sound piece of work. The chief character struck me as dramatic and original, though I have not forgotten the hearty enjoyment of my friend Forster as he 'rallied' me on the title. 'My dear Fitzgerald, what's this I see in the papers? What *is* "BeautyTalbot"? Is it he or she?'

I thought that Byron, who liked character-parts, and had given us Sir Simon Simple, might make something of the character, and sent him the book, asking him to look over it. I received from him a most natural, friendly letter, of singular

interest as a candid explanation of the means and methods of a once popular dramatist. Most truly characteristic is it also, and many pleasant ideas and suggestions it contains. In spite of the compliments to myself, which are 'neither here nor there,' I feel sure that it will give pleasure to the reader:

'I read the book' (he wrote to me) 'with great delight, but it is impossible as the subject of a drama. The character in itself any actor at all capable of representing it (and I confess I see no one capable of doing so) would jump at, so original is it in every way. It, however, requires qualities which no living actor that I know of possesses. John Clayton would be too hard—his great fault; Talbot is all *softness*. Montague is the nearest approach; but he is too *young*, and *cannot* look older by any aid of wig, whiskers, or make-up. He MUST also be strikingly *handsome*. By the way, you said you had only one copy of the book. I feel it would be unfair to keep the one you kindly sent me, so will return it, with very many thanks for the loan.

'Now as to the purport of your letter of yesterday. I have never been able to avail

myself of another writer's plot or suggestions. Unless I work the whole thing from my own foundations I work without *heart*, and you know that means, in my case, foregone failure. I am aware that much I do is conventional in *form*, or *origin*, rather, if original in treatment and "dressing up"; but such as it is, it springs spontaneously from my own mind, and I go to work at it as if it were as fresh, new, and original as any plot, idea, or character could be. The secret of my getting through so much dramatic work (and I *never* work hard or against time), is that I pursue a plan which few of my brother-dramatists adopt, namely, that of planning out most minutely the working of the plot, constructing my piece to the extreme end, marking every scene, describing the nature of the dialogue, and arranging every entrance and exit until the end arrives. Then (never feeling doubt about how Act II. or III. is to be managed) the dialogue comes easily and untrammelled by the accompanying worry of "how on earth shall I get 'so and so' off—or on!" as the case may be.

'Do not consider me unwarrantably communicative in thus writing on a subject which may appear to you somewhat foreign to the matter

of your letter; but I should not do so to a stranger (we have never met actually, it is true), or to one who had not won his spurs, much in the way that I have tried to do, namely, by unflagging industry and honest work, in a parallel department of art.

'If you like to work with me—that is to say, if you think that together we might make a good play out of "The Little Stranger" (what an awful one the *Big* "Stranger" is!)—why, decidedly let us see if it can be done; but in whatever *is* done, the credit of the origination of the whole thing will, of course, rest with *you*. Kindly drop me a line.'

Tom Taylor, the most successful dramatist of his day, I also knew. We were both members of the Garrick Club. He was tall, slight, gentlemanly-looking, with a short gray beard. He seemed to have extraordinary power and influence, with a singular command of the press. In the *Times* he would make irruptions on special occasions, as on the marriage and retirement from the stage of a well-known and interesting actress. Day after day on this occasion there were columns almost of rapturous praise; her gifts and charms

were expatiated on at extraordinary length. It might be Siddons or Rachel withdrawing. Not but that the actress was a real loss to the stage; though she must have smiled at the exaggerated scale on which her merits were celebrated. One night, during the season of the French plays, I sat beside him, and enjoyed his intelligent and amusing criticisms, as well as his conversations with Sarcey, and others of the French critics, with whom he seemed on the easiest terms.

A facetious weekly paper always insisted on speaking of him as 'Tumtaler'—a comically-sounding sobriquet, the origin of which few knew. It seems that a German pundit of some kind came here with letters of introduction to the critic. He was much delighted with the attentions paid him, and went about calling him to every one of his friends 'Tumtaler,' at which the wits were much arrided.

Tom Taylor once paid a visit to Jersey, and discovered a singularly beautiful actress who was playing at the local theatre, of which her husband was manager. They were a model of conjugal affection, and enjoyed the respect as well as the patronage of their neighbours. The visitor was enraptured with the newly-discovered beauty, who was, indeed,

no actress, and might be even considered quite unsuited to the stage. It has always seemed to me that this was one of the most tragic histories of the many that are connected with the stage. The enraptured critic insisted that the fair creature and her husband should come to London, where he found an engagement for them, and prepared the way, as well he could do. The beautiful Mrs. Rousby was presently the talk of the town, and for a year or two was 'run after' almost tumultuously. The disastrous sequel is well known—a sad, reckless course, general decay, and an early grave.

Actors are pleasant personages to know and meet, from the fact that they either really enjoy, or affect to have, good spirits, or, at least, a light, buoyant fashion of looking at men and things. Their normal state is to be looked at and listened to; they naturally carry into their private life a sort of histrionic bearing. Nothing, by the way, seems to me more astonishing than the sort of *glorified* air that attends the actor when he is in his own proper domain. His walk, his bearing, the lights, etc., seem to transform him into something paradisiacal. In vain we assure ourselves that this is that shabby, prosaic, blue-chinned personage

who has passed us in the street. After the magic hour of eight he is touched with the wand, and becomes a new being. In my own case nothing will shake this impression. But stand at the wing, and it is strange how the declamations, movements, gestures, crossings, become prosaic.*

I have known a goodly number of these pleasant mercurial beings: the Wigans, Boucicault, Miss Cavendish, Irving, Miss Terry, Hare, Emery, Alexander, Toole, Lionel Brough, Howe, Grossmith, Thorne, with many more. Irving I have known the longest, almost from his first success. He is, it need not be said, a truly interesting man, quite unspoiled by success, and with a great deal of that tranquil, gentle manner which distinguished Dickens. Indeed, in many other ways he reminds one of the great writer. What I think of him, his character and career, I have said at due length in a recently published life of the actor. All his

* Once I was thus standing with Dickens at the wing of the Princess's stage, when this struck me forcibly. Fechter and Miss Le Clerq were reciting passionately the love distresses of Claude Melnotte and his Pauline. But there was nothing but a stoutish, middle-aged man moving about a few yards away from us. Dickens at this time had his own key to the stage-door, and admitted himself when he pleased.

friends will agree that their relations with him have ever been of the most agreeable kind.*

Actors are often delightful company when they have real social gifts, and when they are buoyant in disposition, such as is the agreeable George Grossmith—the 'Gee-Gee' of his friends—who is by profession a keen observer of character and the humours of life. To hear him relate these little careless traits is like listening to him on the platform.† But I have noted that 'low' comedians

* Some years ago it was said that there were but four public men who had the gift of 'distinction' of character. These were Mr. Gladstone, Cardinal Manning, Irving, and—Archer, the jockey! Odd as is the addition of this last item, Archer certainly excited a sympathetic interest. This power of exciting or drawing sympathies is an extraordinary one, and also most precious. There are few faces which you would stop or be drawn to look after in the street. This you were impelled to do in the case of three of these just named.

† Not long since I met him in the country, on the Thames, where he was for his *villeggiatura*. He described a local doctor of lugubrious, desponding vein, who complained bitterly of how everything 'went contrairy' with him. 'Why, sir,' he said, 'I was attending a patient last week, and assured the relations he could not recover, when they called in an ignorant fellow who has set up against me, and who said: "Pooh! pooh! he *will* recover." And what do you think, sir? the man *did*.' George duly sympathized. 'Then there was an old woman past eighty, with a complication of things. I could give them no hope; she was bound to die. When the fellow again comes, "Pooh! pooh! she'll be all right!" And would you

are not as cheerfully exuberant as one would expect from their office. But the low comedian is not as much appreciated as he used to be ; in fact, the calling is dying out.

It is only when we take stock of the various persons we have known, call them up with all their ' ways,' and set them formally before us, that we can see the infinite variety of character and whimsical humour that is to be found on these London boards. By the aid of living characters, we can come to understand dead ones, and *vice versâ*. Thus I never perfectly understood Oliver Goldsmith till I met the late Wills, the dramatist. A few minutes with him, and you at once grasped the strange, incoherent combination that was in the poet—of good nature, hurry, cleverness, and sensitiveness.

Wills was an interesting being : and natural—now sanguine and impulsive, now dejected. A short time after our first acquaintance I remember dining with him at that midnight club, the Arundel. Another friend was of the party, and

believe it, so she was ! What am I to do ?' ' Well, do you know,' said his friend, ' I would advise you to do like him, and try a *little of his favourable prophesying*.'

on some allusion to 'dear dirty Dublin,' he called out, 'Why, Wills, so you are an Irishman, after all! I never knew *that*.' 'And why *not?*' said the other with heat. 'I'm not *ashamed* of it, am I? Do you mean to say that?' 'No, no, I only mean it *was* curious that I had never heard of it before.' There was a pleasant touch of character here, in his resenting the reproach that he had been concealing his nationality.

Never was there a more good-natured yet inconsequent being. He lived at a studio in the Fulham Road, with a number of his countrymen and others 'hanging loose on' him, to whom his purse, and his shelter too, was always open. He was always attended by a small band of half-admirers, half-followers, again exactly like Goldsmith; some of them would be quartered for a night or more in the studio.

At one time he had devoted himself to pastel portrait-painting, and really promised to be a graceful and effective artist. He was invited to paint one of the Princesses, and his picture gave great satisfaction. In his careless, *insouciant* fashion he sent it in to the Academy, without giving it a thought, or drawing attention, I believe, to the subject, and I heard that it was

rejected. By-and-by came some inquiry from 'the Court,' and I remember hearing of the amusing agitation and concern of the courtly President, Sir Francis Grant, who in person made a hurried search among the rejected miscellany, and had the portrait hung in a place of honour. This was an important opening, and, with steady exertion, might have led him on to fortune.

One day he received an invitation to repair to Windsor, to paint the portrait of yet another royalty—in short, was 'commanded to Windsor,' as it is called; but in his simple way sent down word that he had an engagement, and could not go that day. This must have been a shock to the private secretaries, equerries, etc. I remember Forster heartily applauding this act: it showed spirit, he thought. Wills was no lackey, he said, to be bidden or ordered about. Still, it was a folly. And again it exactly recalled Goldsmith, who, sent for by a Minister, and invited to say what could be done for him, carelessly said that he wanted nothing for himself, but had a brother in the Church, etc.

It was certainly proof of cleverness, or at least versatility, to have been at once artist, novelist,

poet and dramatist. Wills was all these in a more than respectable way. As an artist he might have excelled, had he but 'stuck to it.' One of his novels, 'David Chantry,' attracted much attention as a striking and original work. He overflowed with poetry, and could turn on streams of blank verse with wonderful facility. There was within him a soft, tender, and romantic vein. His earliest play, 'The Man o' Airlie,' which had been taken up by Hermann Vezin, had much success. It was really an adaptation of a German piece shaped into a Scotch one. Vezin is a most classical and correct performer, but by some fatality his merits seemed to soar above only an appreciation. The public has always been reserved, if not cold, in regard to him and artists of his pattern.

It was fortunate for Wills that he became acquainted with Irving and his manager, Bateman. The notion of a poetical drama on Charles I. attracted all three, though at the present moment I doubt if such a subject would be acceptable. There are many stories current as to the progress of the manufacture of this piece, Wills carrying in whole sheafs of blank verse, none of which was found satisfactory or dramatic. The old

'Colonel' and the actor, however, used their pruning-knives freely, and by consultation the play was at last fashioned into proper shape.

There can be no doubt that every piece ought 'to be written in the theatre,' as it is called; that is, the manager and principal actors ought to have a part in the composition; so it was with Garrick and Kemble. I was present at the first performance of the play, and noted its wonderful reception, and admired, with all the world, Irving's admirable performance of the King.* The oddity, however, was to see Belmore, the lowest of low comedians, portraying Cromwell! It was refreshing and novel to hear Wills's mellifluous lines, some of which contained genuine poetry, poured out with such ease and abundance.

'Eugene Aram' did not take hold so readily, and was, in fact, a rather lugubrious business. Indeed, the author was strangely deficient in managing the construction of his dramas; some of his freaks in this way were truly fantastic.

There was a play he once wrote for the Hay-

* At this time Irving had not overcome certain peculiarities of pronunciation, and the satirists used to be merry over his fashion of voicing one passage.

market, when there was also given a slight piece by myself, 'The Henwitchers,' in which the veteran Howe, of all persons in the world, took a 'rattling' light-comedy part! 'Ellen' was the name of this piece, and a most incoherent, wild thing it was. I recall particularly poor Howe having to carry on in his arms an immense Indian jar, which had to be broken in pieces, and on which an immense deal of the plot turned. The author, ever enthusiastic and persuasive, induced the manager to let him take back his piece and 'strengthen' it, and, after an interval, it was actually brought forward a second time, recast, but with no result. It always seemed a mystery how he contrived to put together 'Olivia,' which is a marvel of construction and judicious arrangement. Some of his pieces still keep the stage, such as 'Jane Shore' and the 'Royal Divorce,' in which one of the actors, Mr. Carson, exhibited a singular likeness to Napoleon.

His 'Faust' had enormous success, but it was 'written in the theatre' under strict and sagacious direction. I was concerned with him in the fabrication of another piece for Mr. Bateman, 'Vanderdecken.' Irving was much attracted by the subject, and induced the old 'Colonel' to

give us both a commission to undertake the work. On such occasions Wills gave way to his full enthusiasm. I see him now in council, pouring out all kinds of suggestions, each of which was 'to fetch 'em,' 'bring down the house,' etc. We contrived a scenario, but it did not give satisfaction, and the whole plan was laid aside. After a time it was entrusted to Wills alone, to be once more laid aside. After the 'Colonel's' death it was once more taken up and entrusted to myself. It was again put aside, and finally taken up to be given to Wills and myself once more.*

Of all uncertain things in the world, stage things are the most uncertain. No human administrator is so much at the mercy of events. Manager, theatre, actor, public, author himself, all contrive to furnish impediments. Still, I had such faith in the plan that I later set to work on my own account, and wrote—and printed also—the first act, which attracted both actor and manager, and the plan was once more resumed.

* I wrote the whole of the first act, and a portion of the second; Wills, and another concealed hand, the rest. Wills would write a fragment of the poetry—five or six lines it might be—with which he would enthusiastically set out, calling on me on his way, to read them to the actor, who would placidly express his satisfaction with this meagre instalment.

After many delays and changes, the aid of other 'hands' and collaborators was invited, and at last the piece was produced. Poor Mrs. Bateman, who by this time was manageress, must have often thought ruefully of the peck of troubles this Satanic piece had brought her.*

Not many years ago, a very familiar figure about the town theatrical was Palgrave Simpson, a wonderfully juvenile veteran who continued tall and erect to the last. His stage work was enormous, and the number of pieces he wrote or adapted extraordinary. He had a firm, secure touch, and was thoroughly workmanlike in his work. Some of the most familiar and often-acted pieces of the repertoire will be found to be signed with his name. He was indeed a first-rate adapter—witness his 'Scrap of Paper.'

I remember one summer evening, when we

* Various claimants appeared, whom she had somewhat inconsiderately consulted on her scheme, and whose 'ideas' she had invited. One was the late Palgrave Simpson—'good old Pal,' who was most 'practical' in all business matters. He had furnished a short sketch of a plot, covering a couple of sheets of paper, for which he demanded and received £100. Another was Mr. Robert Buchanan, who, I believe, had submitted an already written play to the management, which, I think, was subsequently produced at another theatre.

were sitting under the porch of the Athenæum, he fell into a reminiscent mood, and told me the rather pathetic story of his life and struggles. He had been brought up to the prospect of a fair provision, and learned, suddenly I think, that even this was lost, and that he had nothing left in the world. He then determined to be a dramatist, and, to learn his business, went to Paris, was introduced to Scribe and other 'masters,' and, I think he said, was instructed by them. On his return he prepared various pieces, which he offered in vain to the different managers. In despair, he was one day walking by Brompton Square, when he encountered one of the Keeleys, I think, or Mrs. Frank Mathews, I am not certain which, who asked him kindly about his prospects. He sent them one of his pieces, which they took up promptly, and its success led him on to other successes. He was always prudent, and succeeded in laying by a slender provision for his old age. He was a good-natured man, social enough, and almost lived at his two clubs, the Athenæum and the Garrick. He had a fancy for patronizing clever young men, whose interest he would good-naturedly do his best to advance, such as 'Jack Clayton,' *alias* Calthorpe, in whose career he was

always interested. He generally had a few friends to breakfast on Sundays.

To the close of his life he was afflicted with a most distressing bronchial cough, the fits of which, once they seized on him, became appalling from their noise and violence. As he was passionately fond of the theatre, always attending 'first nights,' this was a serious drawback: it was pathetic almost to see the caution with which he humoured his enemy, which lay in ambuscade, ready to burst out of its kennel like some fierce mastiff. By this careful treatment he would often contrive to get safely through the night; but a very slight start or surprise would rouse it, and his only resource then was to fly abruptly from the stalls.*

Palgrave Simpson had led a bustling life; but

* I recall a grotesque scene of this sort at the Lyceum. A well-known antique Duke, who had conceived a great admiration for Irving's playing, used to repair with a friend to a private box. He also was afflicted with these bronchial attacks, only he had not the same scrupulousness as Palgrave Simpson. At some critical or dramatic moment the fit would come on, and the violent sounds issuing from so conspicuous a place irritated and inflamed the audience, who would call out 'Silence!' and finally, without respect to his dignity, raise the cry of 'Turn him out!' The nobleman, however, coolly coughed on till he got relief.

not long before his death, when, as one of his friends said, 'he was withdrawn from circulation,' his old friend, Father Bowden of the Oratory, found him out and brought him into a very religious frame of mind, in which he continued till his death.

A great ally of his was Dr. Cox, Vicar of the picturesque church of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate Street, a congenial clergyman, with a rather curious 'record.' He was one of the theatrical clerics, had musical tastes, had known all the great opera-singers, comedians, etc.; was the friend of Grisi, and Lablache and Co., and had written two volumes of pleasant musical recollections. He used to attend the theatre in strict clerical costume, and was eke a good critic. I was much surprised when I was introduced to him, one night, in the stalls by his friend 'Pal.' It must be said that he did not take his clerical duties very seriously; most of his day he spent at the Athenæum Club, and of nights he repaired to his chambers in Dane's Inn, that queer, old-fashioned solitude which has at last been invaded by the speculative builders. As he grew feeble, this return home alone at night was fraught with serious dangers. From his friend 'Pal' he was

inseparable ; they always dined together. But at last, to the amusement and surprise of their friends, a violent breach took place between them. Dr. Cox was the father of the Rev. Bell Cox, who was involved in such fierce ritualistic struggles ; and the doctor often expatiated on this trial to his paternal feelings, though I fancy he had little concern with them. Latterly he became rather eccentric and troublesome to his friends, and finally withdrew, to be seen no more.

Some years ago there disappeared from the scene a figure who was very familiar in the London writing world, Lewis Wingfield, a clever mercurial being who had had a rather motley career. In spite of his cleverness, he was a type of those persons who rarely attain success, though they sometimes come very near to it. In this he resembled his friend 'Frank' Marshall. Like him, in his time, he had played many parts. The truth is, in the case of such characters, their real calling is a social one, the 'writing' element being added as an excuse or qualification. There are, and have been, a number of persons who, though but slenderly qualified, have actually made a sort of reputa-

tion, and become well known, possibly owing to the good-natured trumpetings of friends. Their slight literary 'baggage' will go farther, and attract more attention, than the solid stuff of some really capable person.

Lewis Wingfield was very popular, particularly in one lively jovial set; he was nearly always to be found at the Beefsteak Club, hard by Toole's Theatre, or else at the Garrick. Here he had many friends; like other people of the community, too, certain *littérateurs* are glad to 'hob-nob' with one who has a handle to his name. He had a piping, feminine voice, with a sort of treble laugh, which always drew attention to his presence.

His was, as I said, a strangely chequered career, ending, as is so often the case with our brethren, in gloom and failure. He was, undoubtedly, clever, mercurial, versatile, but, as Johnson once said of his Bozzy, 'lacked bottom.' He tried innumerable ventures and exhibitions of his talents, all, as he fancied, with sufficient success. Had he let himself be guided by the wise counsels of his relatives, of his sensible pious mother, the late Lady Londonderry, and his cultured brother, Lord Powerscourt, a successful and flourishing

career in diplomacy or in the Home service might have been assured him. But he longed for something more irregular and less restrained. He revelled in amateur acting, and was always performing with some company somewhere or other in the kingdom. I vividly recall the astonishment when it was announced that he had resolved, to the consternation of his relatives, to adopt the stage as his profession; for at that time it was not so common for persons of his position to adopt it.

I went to see his début, which was at a 'poorish' theatre in Dublin—'the Queen's' it was called. The piece was a burlesque, and it was distressing to find the debutant appearing as a *ballerina*. The worst of it was that the exhibition was not very successful; he had not much humour, and it was really grotesque to note how pitilessly the coarse 'comic man' of the troupe set himself to 'play him down,' overpowering him, and not giving him a chance.

Wingfield, however, was sensible enough to see that here he was not likely to succeed, and, yielding to the persuasion of his friends, withdrew from the stage. He next conceived a passion for painting, and went to Paris to study, choosing

what is called 'high art.' Here he spent some years, and produced extraordinary works. Some of these I have seen, but I must frankly own that he seemed to me quite as unsuited for this walk of art as he was for some others. He soon gave up this pursuit also.

He next became a journalist, found himself in Paris on the eve of the siege, and allowed himself, from his innate love of adventure, to be shut in there. He contrived to be appointed correspondent, or assistant-correspondent, of the *Daily Telegraph*, and sent home vivacious letters 'by balloon post.' He used often to relate his adventures. Indeed, he found many friends in the gay city during this season of disaster, and, in his Bohemian fashion, he rather relished the difficulties and privations of his situation. Later he became very intimate with actors and actresses of all kinds and degrees, and presently set up as a dramatic critic, writing for the *Globe*, and signing himself 'Whyte Tighe.' But 'Whyte Tighe's' judgments were so rash and outspoken, and raised up so many enemies, that after a time his services were not required. It is one of the secrets of criticism to be able to say what is severe without offence. A person not to the

manner born will write very smart things, and 'pitch into' everyone and everything; but this will not do for a paper. Spades must not be called spades, or enemies and remonstrants will rise up in battalions.

Next he appeared as novelist, and here with more success. His 'Lady Grizel' gave some pleasure, and was talked about. After that, he wrote a good many more stories. He expected great things from an Irish tale called 'The Lords of Strogue,' but it made little impression. The truth is, Irish or French or German stories are rarely popular. The writer of such things handicaps himself. In these later days, Miss Emily Lawless is the only one who has succeeded in attracting the public with her Irish tales. But *she* is a fine artist; her characters are large in treatment, and rise above local associations.

At times there used to be heard a good deal of plays by the 'Hon. Lewis Wingfield,' but I don't think any one was actually produced. He maintained, however, such close relations with the managers and actors that he really impressed them with the notion that he was an artist of high capacity, and was often employed to design dresses for some spectacular play, and even to

'get up,' as it is called, a piece. His notions of designing dresses, I must say, were rather crude and elementary. He lacked that firm, decided touch which comes of thorough knowledge, and which is found in Wilhelm's admirable designs, whose sketches even are finely finished works. Miss Anderson entrusted him with the entire getting up of Romeo and Juliet at the Lyceum, and her example was followed by other managers. 'Getting up' a Shakespearian play requires much knowledge, tact, and skill in stage matters, though there is, of course, an ordinary recipe for developing situations, and 'working them up' with scenery and crowds of figures, etc.

I remember, at the opening of the play, a very naturalistic effect was contrived out of the street quarrel between the rival factions. This, as we know, was a mere scuffle; but Wingfield saw his opportunity, and worked out a grand battle! By degrees the whole stage filled with an excited population, crowds came pouring in from the by-streets, noise and fury were abroad, ferocious conflicts took place, windows were thrown open, and agitated natives looked out on the fray. It was agreed that nothing could be more 'realistic' or effective. But it was unsuited to the situation,

and distorted the story, which, as I said, turned on the contest between mere local factions.

Lewis Wingfield lived in the old-fashioned Mecklenburgh Square, close by his friend Sala, and his house had a museum-like air from the many curios and objects of art which he had collected. These were dispersed at his death, and fetched but little. In his latter days he had made a long tour in India, of which he wrote a passable account. Latterly he was fated to experience in a rather mortifying way that failure of public interest—not to say indifference to his work—which so many literary men often encounter. As I have shown elsewhere, this arises from the innumerable claimants to attention who have their day, their very short day, and a trifling success: then subside and are forgotten. The attention of the public is but a fixed quantity, and has to be distributed among many claimants. What is given to one must be taken from another. Of this decay I have seen many instances.

Wingfield once wrote a very curious and powerful story supposed to be the confessions of an actual convict. In this there were some really striking passages, notably the scene where the convict gets a glimpse from the 'Black Maria'

of his wife and children looking out of a window. It was a gruesome subject, scarcely falling within the bounds of fiction. It was characteristic of him that, with a view to secure local colour and vividness of treatment, he obtained leave to shut himself up in one of the convict prisons. Any adventure of this kind he revelled in. I am afraid, in his latter days, the genial Lewis was destined to feel what is called the pressure of the times. His little patrimony was in Ireland, and he suffered accordingly. He died after a short illness, and was regretted by his friends, as a cheerful, clever, and amusing being.

Another of these pleasant creatures, not without 'a dash' of eccentricity, was Frank Marshall, a man whom everyone knew, and of whom many stories were told. His was a rather spasmodic nature, as might be guessed from his strange figure, familiar enough at a first night's performance. Like so many of this mercurial species, he started with fair prospects, owing to his energy and spirit. He had a fortune of his own, and later inherited his brother's estate; but nothing could wean him from the attractions of writing, and the associations connected with

writing. I could understand his feeling, for to me every social pleasure seems *flat* in comparison. He had many friends who thoroughly believed in him and liked him.

I remember his comedy, 'False Shame,' written somewhat after the fashion of Douglas Jerrold's pieces—a good school. This was really a pleasing work. It was originally entitled 'The White Feather,' but as it was found that he had been anticipated in this title, he had to change it at the last moment. It was brought out by Montague, and that agreeable, interesting actress, Rose Massey, who then supported him in all his pieces. These tranquil comedies, with their placid development, have altogether 'gone out.' There is now in demand something smarter and more superficial, more in the way of enlarged farce, hasty, abrupt, and boisterous in treatment. The effects, though more rapid and telling at the moment, are superficial enough. It may be seriously doubted if such things are faithful representations of real life, and the charm—such as it is—of people 'hiding in cupboards' and assuming grotesque disguises is soon exhausted.

Beyond a play or two, 'A Study of Hamlet,' and an edition of Shakespeare, undertaken in

collaboration with Irving, Frank Marshall did little to win a reputation. Yet reputation he had; he was well known, and looked upon as an authority. Reputations in London are often made in the most mysterious way. It would all seem to depend on personality. Really clever people may cross the Metropolitan orbit without attracting notice, while some self-asserting person, who has literally done nothing, or next to nothing, will be talked of and read of everywhere. The mystery of it is this: it depends a good deal on friends—friends who write in books, journals, society papers, and the like. This sort of 'log-rolling' explains how some may steal horses *galore*, while others may not so much as look over the hedge. In the writing world, as I shall show later, it is not writing alone that gets you on.

Frank Marshall was a striking illustration of this. He was a squire, and independent; as I said, was social, and eke hospitable. To Irving he attached himself. He was presumed to be his adviser and director in matters of nice criticism. He had written on 'the Bard,' and used to prefix criticisms to acting editions of Irving's plays. I doubt, however, if his Shakespearian

views were to be taken very 'seriously.' He was too flighty for sober judicial criticism. A few years before his death he persuaded a firm of publishers to undertake a costly Shakespearian venture—'The Irving Shakespeare' it was called—the theory whereof was that the great tragedian was to furnish his views and theories on the plays of 'the Bard,' after discussing the various passages with his friend, who was then to put these theories into proper form. It need not be said that an edition of Shakespeare is a work of so gigantic a kind as properly to engross the labour of a life, requiring an equipment of the most extensive kind, perfect familiarity with the contemporary literature, together with the English scholarship of a Skeat. This Frank Marshall could scarcely be said to possess. At the same time, I can quite fancy that Irving's natural Shakespearian instinct and judgment would be very effective, and supply many lights to illustrate the meaning of various portions. Indeed, some of his own little scattered essays show that he possesses this nice critical sense and Shakespearian instinct in a high degree. The editor, however, unhappily died midway in the course of the work; and others, including Joseph Knight, a very judicious critic, were called in to

finish it. It remains a handsome and useful edition.

Frank Marshall had a fancy for collecting curios in the shape of rare theatrical and other works. Not long before his death, during the sudden Dickens 'boom,' he gave, I think, £50 for a choice, 'unadulterated' it was called, 'Pickwick,' with all its Buss plates, cancelled and retained, original advertisements, 'addresses,' and green covers, etc.* Like so many of his friends and companions, he was destined before the close of his life to experience the decay which, as I have said, so often attends an erratic career. He fell into bad health, and suffered much; he seemed to be rather forgotten, and to have fallen out of his old place. He somewhat surprised his friends by his marriage with that popular actress and excellent woman, Miss Ada Cavendish. In his fortunes, too, I think he was not so prosperous as he had been. When he died it was hoped that a large sum would be realized by the sale of his rare works and curios, but as a matter of fact they fetched very little. So strong was his

* This price made a sensation, but it was said, in the slang of the knowing ones, that it was what is called a '*faked up*' copy; that is, one artfully compounded from others.

passion for these rarities, that I remember hearing that almost on his deathbed he could not resist giving 'orders' out of some tempting catalogue. Frank Marshall furnishes yet one more instance of the incompatibility between the writing life and a life of joviality. Few would suppose how fatal becomes the attempt at combining the two courses in this rackety London, and how many it destroys. I have known many clever men, stalwart, resolute fellows, of iron frame, working hard, with their work in much demand, but with a taste as strong for social life and convivial joys—the most fatal method of 'burning the candle at both ends.'

The road is strewn with the victims of this disastrous system, but there are others to take their place instantly, only too ready to follow the same course.

One pre-eminent instance occurs to me of this 'burning the candle at both ends,' one which is well known to literary men. This author was agreeable, a good talker, well trained in writing and in politics. He was 'a prolific writer,' and wrote in many papers.

He was known to have a keen sagacity in judging politics, and—which was unfortunate—

his society was welcomed by the great personages of politics, Cabinet Ministers, great ladies of fashion, and others. Hence the long succession of dinners to which the influential writer was 'engaged' every night of the week; yet at the same time he had to continue his heavy, weary labours to maintain his position. The drudgery of editing is always recurring and never ceases. The strain is enormous, for the thing must be conscientiously carried out; any oversight or error is conspicuous, and fatally discredits. It was no surprise when it was known that he had completely broken down, and that the labours and the feasts had to be given up, as it proved, for ever.

Apropos of 'Bohemianism,' now 'much gone out,' I often used to find in the Tinsleys' office a rather rotund and jovial German, who had many a jest and story, delivered with a strong native accent. This was Dr. Strauss, a clever, exuberant being who had passed through a life of extraordinary adventure. He was one of the choice spirits of the Savage Club, with whose humours he thoroughly identified himself, in spite of the difficulties of foreign extraction. He related his strange life in a book of extraordinary power and

attraction—'An Old Bohemian'—in which his adventures are given with singular dramatic power and picturesque effect. Here we have German military life, plottings, revolutions, characters, all touched with singular skill, and written in excellent English. He finished his days in the Charterhouse, whence he used to escape occasionally to come and talk with his friends. One day, passing an auction, he went in, and a 'lot' of handkerchiefs of all colours and patterns was 'knocked down' to him. Repairing to his favourite resort, he found a very precise person expatiating on some bald topic, whom he thoroughly scared by pulling out his handkerchiefs: 'Not bad for one morning's walk down Regent Street, eh?' Both he and his book left an extraordinary impression of power and ability. He seemed to be more genuinely Bohemian than his fellows.

Another interesting, clever man was the late Sir Charles Young. 'Bart.,' as he was invariably set down,* who seems to me to have furnished something to the romance of the ever romantic

* Managers shrewdly make the most of these adornments for their bills. Nowadays when 'a gentleman' writes a play he is set forth as 'Mr. ——.' The author of 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray' is simply 'Arthur Pinero.'

stage. He had a passion for acting and for writing plays, and devoted himself to these things with an ardour, toil, and perseverance that must have given him success in any other pursuit that he might have adopted. Yet it was only at the close of his life that a gleam of anything like success came to him. He was young, good-looking, and pleasant of speech. He had to struggle a good deal with the caprices of Fortune, not being very well off, as it is called. I remember his humorous protest against the various Red or Blue books which persisted in endowing him with a handsome country place, which he had long since relinquished. As an actor, he had almost as much training as any performer on the stage, appearing year after year at innumerable amateur performances all over the kingdom. Naturally, he was in demand, as he played with spirit, particularly in characters of a chivalrous complexion. At Lady Freake's pretty theatre at Cromwell House he was invariably engaged, usually performing with the clever, judicious, and well-trained Lady, then Mrs., Monckton, who even in those days was quite competent to take the place on the boards she now fills with such effect. At this theatre, important pieces were brought out, excel-

lently 'staged,' and acted with spirit and good effect. Amongst others, 'The Wife's Secret' was thus performed by Sir Charles, Mrs. Monckton, and the late Samuel Brandram.

Sir Charles was often found, too, in Sir Percy Shelley's corps at another inviting, admirably-appointed private theatre, that at Boscombe Manor, close to Bournemouth. What jocund nights have we seen at the Manor! What admirably-performed plays at the pleasant Christmas season, when the selected Bournemouthians bidden to the festival would drive out through the sombre pine-groves! The theatre was handsome and spacious, with ascending seats and a fine, well-fitted stage. I remember one morning the host showing me his ingeniously-designed apparatus for changing the scenes, the lighting, etc., all contrived in the most perfect manner. He, indeed, kept a permanent painter and property man. His corps were accustomed to act together, and really performed with much ease, force, and smoothness. There were the versatile Ponsonbys, with Gooch and Gibson, who had some tragic power, and Sir Charles, aforesaid.

It was always a surprise to think, and you had

almost to remind yourself occasionally of the fact, that you had the great poet's son before you in this quiet, unassuming Sir Percy. He was thoroughly unaffected, and a most kindly host. Occasionally he gave his own pieces, which, however well intentioned, were not very striking compositions; and in melodramas, which primitive line he particularly affected, he dealt with smugglers, combats with cutlasses, etc., and such antique resources. His acting, too, it must be admitted, was rather jejune, and his elocution rough and stiff, often impairing the general effect. He, however, modestly enough contented himself with unobtrusive parts. A night at Boscombe will always dwell in the memory, with the figure of the interesting and hospitable hostess, Lady Shelley, whose reverent enthusiasm for the memory of her poet is remarkable. The lights have long since gone out, and with the death of the owner the curtain 'rang down.'

Not content with this Pastoral Temple, its manager reared a very solid, imposing theatre in Tite Street, Chelsea, hard by Shelley House on the Embankment. Here I have witnessed performances of much merit. But the venture came to an untimely end, and the extinction was

prefaced by much that was harassing and annoying. As is well known, the building was let for performances, and some of the neighbours, disturbed by the noise of carriages, etc., went to law with the owner, and after much litigation the nuisance was 'abated.' It now stands as it did, and as it has done for years—closed.

To return to Sir Charles Young. I knew him well, and liked him and his buoyant spirit, for he was always sanguine and looking for success. When Miss Cavendish was starting on her rather unlucky venture at the Olympic many years ago, I had furnished her with a slight farce, called 'The William Simpson,' while Sir Charles provided a drama of a melodramatic cast. That, I think, was his earliest public attempt. From that time he was unwearied in seizing every opening to bring forward something of his own writing, but nothing seemed to attract. Still, he persevered. Speaking without partiality, I may say that his pieces were quite as good as the ordinary 'plays of commerce' that were performed in his time. There was even a genuine dramatic spirit in them, though there was a lack of firm touch and experience. One or two of his trifles, such as 'Yellow Roses,' found favour. But it was

disheartening work, and though with difficulty he got a piece out at long intervals, he made no way. He at last fell into ill-health. A perverse fate even then opposed him. It came to pass that when the Bancrofts had retired from the Haymarket, they were succeeded by two managers, who started under the most favourable auspices with an American piece from which much had been expected, but which completely failed. They were as unfortunate in its successor, and, ill prepared to meet such casualties, they did not know where to turn to. At this crisis they thought, as a desperate chance, of a piece that had been given at a morning performance, and which was so striking and original that it obtained all the success that the conditions of a matinée admitted. This was the now well-known 'Jim the Penman,' the work of the sick Sir Charles Young. Its success was extraordinary ; it travelled over the kingdom, to America, and the colonies, and everywhere excited interest. At last the persevering author had found success. But the success came too late—he died not long afterwards.*

* A little piece of my own, 'Room No. 20,' was performed about the same time and at the same house, and thus I became associated with his early failure and his late success.

CHAPTER XIV.

MEYERBEER—WAGNER—LISZT.

The drama naturally suggests music, and its delightful associations; the figures of great composers and musicians always strike the eye pleasantly. We turn to them with more interest and reverence than we do to those of poets and writers. A few of these figures rise before me now. Some thirty years ago, Spa was a delightful little corner, unspoiled, unchanged, old-fashioned as it was at the beginning of the century. Never shall I forget the enticing, sequestered look of the little valley, with its umbrageous hill. There was still standing the old church, the old pump-room of the days of Peter the Great; while the charming promenades 'de sept heures' and others were not yet cut up and enclosed. The place was little known, and in as little fashion. The gambling went on, however, in the rooms of the casino,

which dated from an era before the revolution. Elegant rooms they are; the ball-room with its white pillars and terraces of crimson, and the very original little circular theatre beyond. There were other old-fashioned halls about, notably 'Le Wauxhall,' a high-roofed château-like building forming three sides of a square, with old iron gates in front. It was all sadly dilapidated, with gardens behind and all round it, once laid out in fair walks and beds, now grown rank with tall grass and luxuriant weeds. Its grand salon was used for the English service on Sundays. There was also the Salle Levoz, another derelict. The old-fashioned note of Spa, in its palmy days, was to change the scene as much as possible, and take the gay company from one hall to another, with a concert or ridotto at different places. They used to drive out to breakfast, to one of the many pretty fountains in the suburbs—Geronstère, Sauvenière, etc.

This old-fashioned place, with its calm retirement and pastoral walks, was exactly suited to the eminent and interesting composer Meyerbeer, whom we used to find here very often indeed, and whom the natives venerated and admired for this preference of honour. Everything was done to make it agreeable to him. There was a walk

MEYERBEER AT SPA.

(*A sketch by the author.*)

called after him; even a favourite donkey which he sometimes bestrode was oddly but affectionately christened Meyerbeer. It was pleasant to see this really great man walking about among the groves and alleys. A curious, piquant figure he was, small and frail and shabby, with his yellow face, and Jewish nose, and large, descending mouth. His hat was worn on the back of his head; an old, well-frayed, greenish umbrella was tucked under his arm, all baggy, and disdainful of fastenings. As he walked, or shambled, rather, you could see he was in perfect abstraction, and saw nobody. He was busy, it was known, with his 'Dinorah' or his 'Africaine,' I forget which. This abstraction was perfectly genuine and unaffected. At times he would relax, sit on one of the chairs, glancing at a newspaper, when he would tell one of his children to fetch 'Maman'—he usually spoke in French—when a Jewish-looking lady would come to him.

One night there was to be a great concert up at the 'Wauxhall,' and all the company trooped up in crowds, the lights glimmering through the bosquets. The tall windows were ablaze. It was indeed an important occasion, for it was whispered that the *maestro*—'Meyerbeer lui-même'—would

be there. The spacious *Salle*, elegant with its rusted gilding, faded curtains, flowery stucco, and red-cushioned rout-seats, was filled to the doors. The band of the place was in the orchestra. Suddenly there came a vast sensation ; everyone was standing up and looking to the door. Then arose a burst of tumultuous applause ; it was the *maestro* coming in, his little shrunken figure suggesting that of Thiers. He was bowing with a tolerant humility, and was led to a seat of honour in front. Then the concert began. The band played at him, the singers sang at him, all through the night.

But the grand moment was about the middle, when a gentleman in black and a lady in white satin came out to sing the famous duet in the 'Huguenots.' It was the one with Marcel, 'Je suis Marcel,' etc. They did their best, these good souls, and perhaps for that reason did not do so well as they might have done. It was, indeed, a nervous thing. They were, in fact, but seventh or eighth rate singers. Their voices were what are called small or smallish. The lady, however, shrieked heartily, and at the composer, of course. I noted the yellow face still impassive, attentive, and, I fancied, wincing occasionally.

No doubt it brought back to him the glories of the grand opera, the tumultuous success of that first performance, memories of Nourrit, Falcon, Dorus Gras, and the promenade over Europe. No wonder he seemed pensive. Possibly he had not heard that duet for years. When it was done, he applauded gently and rose to go. Everyone rose also, and applauded tumultuously. Obsequious directors came to him, and brought to him the happy pair of singers, and there was much smiling and congratulating. He must have got home with a sense of relief. For a being of exquisite delicacy and sensitiveness these things must shake and hurt and be painful, more than the world would imagine. I was able to make a little sketch of him at this time, which is a good likeness.

It is generally admitted that one of the most striking personalities of his day was that remarkable man, composer, performer, virtuoso, etc., the late Abbé Liszt. At a distance, even when far away from this country, his wonderful 'magnetic influence' seemed to affect us here. His movements were followed with interest and curiosity; his marvellous playing reached even to our ears, and was understood though unheard. It was

a public event, therefore, when it was announced that this wonderfully dramatic man was coming to London. Everyone was attracted, and it was said, I know not with what truth, that the very cabmen felt that someone strange and remarkable was among them, and would talk familiarly of the 'Habby List,' as they called him. I can only say for myself personally, that I felt irresistibly drawn to see and follow him, being, as it were, under some spell of attraction. The ordinary prosaic Philistine took it all merely as though one of the innumerable foreign visitors had come to us. But to others more refined, such things are real events of moment, such as might occur in a private family, and seriously affect our thoughts.

He was to attend a concert where one of his own 'oratorios' was to be performed. There was a small group of persons gathered at the door of St. James's Hall, when a carriage drove up, and the 'eminent virtuoso,' leaning on the arm of a friend, entered. And a most striking and remarkable figure he looked, arrayed as he was in a sort of 'flowing' ecclesiastical coat, with a strangely cut hat; but it was the face that riveted attention, from the massive features, full of expression, suggesting that of Frederick Lemaitre,

the hair long and hanging on his neck. There was a wonderful *finesse* in the mouth, a sort of sarcastic smile *in posse*. There was a large mole or two on his cheeks. He passed on with a sort of modest air, and had, of course, 'a reception' in the hall.

It was to be a rehearsal of the piece, and for some odd reason the public were admitted. Mackenzie was the conductor, and Mr. Santley the chief singer. The master sat at one side, and it was interesting to note his general restlessness as the performance went on. To say the truth, it was done in a rather crude style, the performers groping rather in the dark, as it were; for, as may be imagined, little was known of the traditions, or of the fashion of performing such things; it was difficult enough to execute the rather involved and tortuous music. We could see the master listening uneasily, painfully even, and moving restlessly on his seat. At last he jumped up, rushed across to the orchestra, and, to the delight and applause of the company, held a long colloquy with the conductor, to whom he seemed to be explaining, with much dramatic force and vehement gesture, the style in which he wished some passages to be given. I don't

think there was much improvement, nor could any be reasonably expected under the circumstances.

However, after half an hour or so, he seemed to grow weary of the business, and, rising to go, received what is called 'an ovation,' which he acknowledged in a theatrical sort of fashion. During the rest of his stay he was occasionally to be seen flitting about, a figure which to the last always excited interest.

He played for her Majesty in private, to her great delight. One of the most interesting scenes was his visit to the Lyceum to see 'Faust,' on the invitation of the ever-hospitable manager, when a little supper followed, where, to his surprise, he found before him his favourite dish, a delicate attention that pleased him hugely. This admired and petted personality had, as was to be expected, his 'ways'—little ways of his own which it was said were rather trying to his friendly host.

This fair earth of ours offers many intellectual enjoyments, for the most part common to all educated persons. Such is the taste for reading, for pictures, scenery, poetry, and the like. Yet none of these, it may be affirmed, approach to

music in attraction. No one who is not a musician can so much as conceive an idea, not merely of the enchantment of music, but even of what it *is*, or of the vast realms it opens out, its kingdoms beyond kingdoms, the noble, elevating themes, the strange indescribable emotions, the following of spirits through this wonderful magic world.

There is, of course, a vulgar notion of music that is currently accepted; there are plenty that can listen to good music with pleasure, and who can recognise airs. But they do not *know* music—no more than does the reading of an Italian newspaper betoken a knowledge of Dante. They are outside the palace.

The true musician has really an extra sense which others are without. It would be impossible to explain the effect of a piece of music, say a symphony, to a non-musician. The monumental grandeur of Bach, Wagner's passion and *fuoco*—the 'ideas,' in short, of all the masters, great and small, developed, enlarged, or compounded—these things it would be as hopeless to describe to an unmusical person as to make a man deaf from his birth understand the sound of a trumpet. Nay, one musician cannot describe

them to another. The effect is felt personally, and that is enough.

When we think of what a vast world it is, what thousands of great compositions there are, embodying ideas of all kinds, characters, tragedy, comedy, humour, most of them ensuring delight and an absorbing enjoyment, it is plain that he who has the golden key gains admission to a new sort of paradise, and that his life has a different complexion from that of others. Of course the unmusical cannot *miss* what they have never enjoyed; but, all the same, they lose much, and are so far inferior to those who are musically gifted.

There is really nothing else analogous to this sense of musical enjoyment. Who, for instance, can explain why the opening bars of some little German song, say by Lassen, should cause such a sense of exquisite emotion, accompanying us by day and by night, haunting the ear, suggesting poetic thoughts, and refining everything about us. An unmusical person will sit out Schumann's Symphony in A minor, and with his best efforts can distinguish little but a series of more or less pleasant sounds. But for the musician it is a beautiful drama, every bar and note meaning

something or suggesting something; he seems to set forth on a walk or journey, through a land filled with exquisite flowers and colours and ravishing sounds, ideas crowding on him all the time.

It is wonderful, too, what a substantial part of a musician's life is filled with music: it attends him as he walks and moves about; he hears it still, all within himself. It is a contribution to his thoughts and fancies. Those, therefore, who know not music are under a serious disability—are imperfect, and lack a sense. They are deprived of one of the noblest pleasures of life. Those who do enjoy it are highly privileged and greatly to be envied, because they have therein a never-failing source of joy. Yet the popular belief is that it is at best a pleasing, trifling pastime, like playing cards or billiards.

So, too, with other accomplishments, such as a real taste for painting. A person who relishes architecture and knows its principles has a perpetual feast. Architecture is almost as large and satisfying as music. Every street and well-built house, towns, cathedrals, castles, gateways, doorways—all attract and set the busy thoughts in motion. So will a taste for sculpture, a relish for fine prints, beautiful books, and the rest.

How these things fill up and fill out life! And how sad the case of the average unfurnished being, who eats and drinks, and goes on visits, and shoots, and spends money! These are treasures that money cannot purchase.

Wagner, it need scarcely be said, has furnished the most entrancing development of this fascinating science, supplying in addition to sensuous delight an intellectual significance, which can only be reached by labour and study. Granting that there is much extravagance, much that is wild and fantastic, dreary and disorderly, in his compositions, there is still left a vast deal that is surpassingly original, and that makes you almost thrill as you listen.

Style I would describe as a superiority to all strict methods and details of expression. The latter should be so familiar, as it were, that it becomes like the act of walking, which we perform instinctively. Genius and design are quite unfettered. The author can go straight to his mark. The 'hodman' painter or musician is hampered and disturbed by difficulties of expression. The beautiful 'Meistersingers' may be considered one of the most perfect repro-

ductions in existence of the *tone* of an era. By the power of the music we are taken back to the old days of Nuremberg, and feel and understand the very thoughts and humours of the burghers. Hans Sachs was but a shoemaker following his craft before men's eyes; yet, by the aid of music and of the tone of the music, he becomes a being full of nobility and stately heroism, his trade an heroic calling. No amount of words could have wrought this magic, no history or description could have told us so much. The scene is created for us, as it were, by inspiration.

It is now near forty years since I first heard Wagner's music, an 'epoch-marking' incident in my life; for during that long period it has exercised the most important influence on all my thoughts and feelings. Without it I should indeed have suffered a most serious loss, and many others, I am sure, would say the same thing. It introduced me to a world altogether new—a world of fancies, dreamings, shadowy figures, battles of gods and giants, mistily displayed, as if on some vast background of half-faded tapestry.

Forty years ago I chanced to be staying at the old Rhenish town of Aix-la-Chapelle,

which was then old-fashioned enough, with its grand Dom and town-hall, twisted narrow streets, and genuine German life; there was the early opera, the dinner at one, and the pleasant supper at eight, into which the stout German fathers of the place came trooping, each having his accustomed seat. Being new to this sort of life, I kept a minute journal, from which I am now tempted to make an extract, showing what was my first impression of this wonderful music. There is at least enthusiasm in what I wrote:

'*Eleven p.m.*—Just come from the opera, after hearing that most extraordinary and miraculous performance of Wagnerian music. Parts of it positively divine—music of the spheres indeed! Those parts the sweetest, unearthliest I ever heard.

'*Next day.*—Now for my impressions of this strange music. In the first place it must be considered always in connection with the style of his librettos, which I have remarked are of the same *genre*—all of a wild and yet extremely simple character. This, of course, imparts a similar tone to the music. This "Lohengrin," which I have now heard, is almost our own legend of "O'Donoghue of the Lakes." From this I

conclude that he finds his music adaptable only to this kind of story, which is certainly well suited to such wild music. As well as I could make it out, the story was this. [Then follows an imperfect account of the plot.]

'As to the music generally, in the first place there are no distinct airs, with perhaps an exception or two. It is really *one* piece of music, which begins at the beginning of the play, and ends at the end. Then I should say his great aim was *contrast.* Thus the chief body of the music consists of what might be considered a recitative, only of a most elaborate, fully-furnished kind. Rather a set of wild phrases coming in one after the other and going on *ad infinitum*, principally accompanied *tremolo* and with a vast deal of brass. Then, by way of contrast, would come in the most exquisite swelling choral bits, so sweet and flowing that I *never* heard their like; made doubly welcome from the stern, dry music that went before; it was like water to the parched traveller in the desert. The other music was quite a new language with new phrases, the voice often singing wildly away in the clouds, and the orchestra "running about," up and down, and everywhere, out of all rule, tone, and canon—seemingly so, at least—no *rapport*

between them, each "ganging his ain gait." At first it seemed chaos, but gradually the ear got accustomed to it. I should say you must be trained to it. After all, I don't see why it should be considered fixed as fate that through all time music should consist of short airs with *accompaniment* of instruments, or why it should have the same form. Another point struck me, too. The orchestra was as prominent as the voices—no subservience—all one mass. So much for the music in general.

'The overture was grand. There was one theme, a wild chant which Lohengrin sings to his swan. This theme is worked up in chorus, and in every conceivable way, even in recitative, when the voice sings something totally different. Then it comes in disguised in other places; you hear it stealing or forcing its way in here, there, and everywhere. This prelude started with the same strain, treated by a few violins, high and *tremolo*, like the beginning of the "Midsummer Night's Dream." Then some reed instrument begins to get entangled with the same theme, and so on until the bass arrives: all then work in, crossing each other and intertwining in the most magical manner Nor did they in join after the

regular style, when you can almost predict the exact moment of arrival. They *stole* in. Commend me to that prelude! I shall never forget the strain. A beautiful duet in the second act for the two women. I am thoroughly Wagnerized.'

For a first hearing this is a fair and tolerably accurate description. On my return home, I brought with me some pieces — notably this prelude about which I had written so rapturously. I showed it to a well-known Professor and Doctor of Music, and well remember his roars of laughter as he went through it:

'My dear sir,' he said, 'it is simply ludicrous; you can't consider it seriously a moment: tum-ti-tum, wee wee—peet peet—up in the moon—oh, it's too childish, really!'

This was, indeed, the general tone at the time. Many years later I met this very Professor coming out of Drury Lane, after a performance of the 'Tristan'—the first time, too, I had heard it.

'Rather heavy and incoherent, you found it?' I aid.

He looked at me somewhat astonished.

'Exquisite,' he cried; 'all but divine!'

He, like so many others, had become a passionate Wagnerian.

How things have 'marched' since those days! Now, the master is found not in his own music alone, but in everyone else's; so irresistible is his influence, no composer can keep the Wagnerian tones and measures out of his score. Common music and common forms seem insipid after these rich and gorgeous measures.

Every musician knows the story of Wagner's first visit to London in 1855, when he was invited to conduct the Philharmonic Concerts. He was treated by all the musical journals as a sort of charlatan, ridiculed, abused, and his music and system derided. Nearly thirty years later he was induced to come once more, when a grand enterprise of concerts at the Albert Hall under his own direction was organized. I remember being present on the opening night, being seated almost in the orchestra. The composer was only a few feet away, and it was interesting to watch his conducting, which even then was pronounced by the players to be far inferior to that of his deputy, Richter, then scarcely known. The *maestro*, while the latter was at work, would sit in a comfortable easy-chair, quite *sans gêne*, listening to his own strains. The venture was unsuccessful, the public being

not then prepared for so large a 'dose' of his compositions.

I was also present on the night when Wagnerian opera was first performed in England —when 'Lohengrin' was introduced at Covent Garden. There was, of course, a great gathering of Germans, who were enthusiastic; but the general public listened with curiosity rather than interest. It took them many years to learn to relish these new strains. All these years, whenever I had an opening, I exercised my humble pen in extolling their merits, and in many magazines and journals strove hard to draw attention to the beauties of this music—'the music of the future,' as it was styled, though the term is now felt to be unsuited, as it is so well established as 'the music of the present.' It was a favourite dull jest with the scoffers to say, 'I hope it always *will* be the music of the future.'

So enthusiastic was I that I pored over his tremendous treatise, 'Opera and Drama,' and strove to master his theories, though in parts it is as unintelligible as the main portion of 'Siegfried.' I ventured even to write to 'the master' himself in Germany, asking for light on some rather obscure points of his theory. I received from him

a courteous letter in French, in which he very naturally pleaded want of leisure as an excuse for not entering on such discussions, but referred me to various works of his, where I might find the matter fully treated.

CHAPTER XV.

THÉRÈSE YELVERTON—THE COUNTS D'ALBANIE—THE COUNT DE JARNAC — PRINCE LUCIEN BONAPARTE—FUNERAL OF NAPOLEON III.

To me there is something irresistibly attractive in the adventurer's course, in those strange dramatic alternations of fortune, and even character, which mark those who make the world their oyster. I constantly find myself irresistibly impelled to linger over their career, and have written their stories. And there are many we encounter who have adventurous lives that are almost as attractive; others go their way in a sort of routine, humdrum course, one week being much the same as another. I have met not a few interesting figures of this kind.

One afternoon, at the Four Courts, Dublin, I chanced to wander into the Court of Common Pleas, where an action began in a very unassuming way. It turned on a Scotch marriage, which, it was contended, was irregular and invalid. Mr.

Whiteside stated the case brightly enough, after which the plaintiff entered the box. She was an attractive person, with very fair or golden hair, and a delicate complexion; and I was struck with the simple, dramatic style in which she unfolded her story, which was an exciting one. A nobleman's son had wooed and won her, and, taking advantage of some technical objection, had refused to acknowledge a Scotch marriage, and had married. This will, no doubt, be recognised as the opening of the well-known Yelverton Case. At this moment curiosity had not been roused, and there were not more than thirty or forty people present. When, however, the story was read in next morning's papers, waves of excitement began to spread, the court was besieged, and everyone began to talk of the injured lady and her wrongs. By-and-by it had become the property of the whole kingdom. Nothing could give an idea of the scenes that occurred in the court. A more interesting heroine could not be imagined; her voice was musical and pathetic, her face winsome. She told her tale in the most effective, because artless, way. Judge, barristers, audience, everybody, were carried away by their feelings. There were tears in the eyes of many. Bursts of

applause or sympathetic groans greeted the more telling passages. The excellent Chief Justice Monahan did his best to hold the scales even, but was overborne by the tumultuous partisanship of the crowd. But it was when the fair plaintiff bore a cross-examination of several days by Mr. Brewster that the excitement became feverish. Her calmness and general sweetness under his rough handling enlisted the sympathy of all hearts. Swords would have flashed from their scabbards to defend her, were such things worn in court. Howls of execration attended any thrust of the cross-examination thought to be unfair. But the plaintiff was more than a match for the defendant's counsel.*

Nothing more tragic could be imagined than the result of this episode. The tumultuous verdict in her favour was, as we know, set aside by the House of Lords. The poor lady, who had counted on the devotion of her enthusiastic Irish supporters, found herself, as was to be expected, neglected, and quite forgotten. With much

* I was carried away like the rest, and in great excitement wrote for Dickens's journal a description of the scenes, to which he gave the name of 'An Unexamined Witness in the Great Marriage Case.' This was copied into, I think, most newspapers of the kingdom.

gallantry she determined to face the world and work for her bread. No one now wanted to hear about her. The play, or show, was over.

She then tried various schemes. Mr. Bentley encouraged her to write, and hoped that a story founded on her own life would be attractive. But 'Martyrs to Circumstances' proved but a 'poorish' thing. She next actually 'farmed' herself out for 'readings,' but to these the public was indifferent.*

She then became a wanderer over the earth,

* I have preserved one of her bills:

ANCIENT COURT ROOM.

THE HONOURABLE MRS. THÉRÈSE YELVERTON

WILL GIVE

TWO READINGS,

Thursday and Friday evenings, April 26 and 27, 1866.

Programme for the First Reading.

PART I.

Locksley Hall - - - - -	Tennyson.
School for Scandal - - - -	R. B. Sheridan.

PART II.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere - - -	Tennyson.
Excelsior - - - - - -	Longfellow.
Selections from Hiawatha - - -	Longfellow.

&c.

visiting South Africa and other far-off regions, I know not with what distinct purpose. A long letter of hers came to me from Natal, which will give a good idea of her nature :

'I hope and believe,' it ran, 'that you have not quite forgotten me! I am overwhelmed physically, morally, and socially, by another hard blow of Fate. My calamity this time arises from the Court of Chancery, where the whole of my estate, left me by my father, has been sequestrated for the defalcations of two members of my family, both dead. One died suddenly, and inopportunely, during the great Irish trial, and brought us into such a dilemma for the want of his evidence. A decree was obtained, which made me liable for the original sum, interest thereon, and costs for over twenty-five years. Still worse, my income during my life would not be sufficient to meet my indebtedness to these Chancery claims. A thousand pounds, the fruits of my own labour, has been lost at my banker's through this equivocal position. The judge who gave the terrible decision remarked that, though I did not appear to be morally responsible, he could give no other. I was thus made a "perpetual pauper," for

there was an injunction served on my publisher, Mr. Bentley, that all my property within his jurisdiction must be paid into the Court. Hence I am debarred from earning my bread within his jurisdiction. I presume this would not include Ireland? And in my almost despair and complete destitution the idea occurred to me to apply to you, who so gallantly did battle for me. Probably you could help me in a literary way. . . . I have been a wanderer since 1868, and have travelled round the earth, writing all the time, and publishing with Mr. Bentley, until stopped by Chancery. My last adventure was with the Empress Eugénie, across South Africa to the place where her son fell. I had intended writing his biography, but, in deference to her wishes, I have given it up. Nevertheless, I have written the sensational journey under another title, and, with photographs of the various places and people, it is now ready. My object in recalling myself to your former kind interest is to ask you to revise and obtain publication for me of my work. I have also in hand a small novel of South African life. I have also travels in Ceylon, and Spain, and Portugal. Or if you could obtain for me a correspondence for a newspaper I could write of

Zulus, Basutos, manners and customs, and general state of affairs here. So many of my true friends have departed this existence that I have to cast about me in search of anyone who can help me in my distress. I have never forgotten you, for the article you wrote must have won the heart of any woman. You seemed to understand me better than anyone else. My life has become so dark and barren that I cannot afford to blot out those few green spots of other days—"Ces beaux jours quand nous étions si miserables." Of course we all become harder and colder from experience of the world's brunts, but I have a conviction that the same leaven which dictated that article must lie in you still; that you will not be indifferent to my sufferings at this time, as you were not then, and will help, or make someone else help, me. Accept my pleasantest souvenirs.

'THÉRÈSE YELVERTON.'

This stirring episode suggests the name of Whiteside, who was the heroine's champion. He was one of Forster's early friends, had studied with him in Chitty's office, and later became Chief Justice of Ireland, and through Forster a friend of Dickens. This brilliant and mercurial man, who

was a born orator, but somewhat erratic and impetuous in his ways, was attractive from this very social recklessness. I knew him well, and I flattered myself that he had rather a liking for me. I admired his wild, unregulated talents, which both in Court and in the House of Commons so often laid him at the mercy of more cautious opponents. No one 'gave himself away' with more facility or enjoyment. His was a long, ill-put-together figure, with straggling arms attached. As he himself once told me, when there was battle expected in the House, the late Lord Derby would say to him, 'Now, Whiteside, where's your shillelagh?' And this fashion of 'slogging' was regularly expected of him. He was destined to have a dashing, spirited career; but he was a sensitive, eager, ambitious man, and felt any disappointment acutely. On a change of Government he had looked with certainty to becoming Lord Chancellor of Ireland, but for political reasons a rival of his at the Bar, Mr. Brewster, was preferred. Though he was made Chief Justice as a *prix de consolation*, the mortification rankled; he fell into a tempestuous state of rage, and for long could not sleep o' nights. Forster's sympathy and kindness at this crisis was of

immense use in soothing and comforting him. There was always something welcome in his exuberance, and even boyishness. He was certainly a brilliant creature, though he had a vanity so persistent as to be almost amusing. He was so warm and impetuous, too, that he contrived to accumulate a host of enemies. The same qualities secured him also many friends.

There was something piteous in the way in which his mercurial spirit seemed to sink as the years went on, and as the rust of his drudgery seemed to enter into his soul. True, he had a splendid office, but he chafed against his provincial retirement, and longed for the stirring atmosphere of political life. Sometimes I met him in London striding on his way, his long arms swinging windmill-like. He was always cordial, and his eye kindled as he talked of his old days.

Most lawyers, I have noticed, are eager to be ranked as *littérateurs*. They look with a sort of envy on 'literary men.' Their own slender performances are their 'ewe lambs.' Whiteside had written travels in Italy, and some vivacious sketches of the leading lawyers, such as Denman, Brougham, Abinger, and others who flourished when he was pursuing his studies in London.

He was always eager to talk of 'writing.' I noticed the same ardour in his countryman, the late Lord O'Hagan, who, more fortunate than Whiteside, secured the prize the latter had so vainly striven for—the Chancellorship. *Qui à bu boira.*

Not long before his death I was asked to prepare a memoir of him for some American cyclopædia, which I did with extra pleasure and alacrity. For, as I said, I liked and admired him. I remember he was greatly pleased, and even flattered. 'I cannot express,' he wrote to me, 'how much I feel your kindness in taking up the subject which you did so generously to-day. I have dropped out of the great world of politics, and am, besides, dropping into the sere and yellow leaf; and so a notice of one so situated is the greatest act of kindness. I found out the *finale* of Mrs. Yelverton's trial — you remember it? Look at the book I send, which tells the tale of her conclusion. Pray look for five minutes in Townsend's volumes at the account of Smith O'Brien's trial. Old Lady O'Brien, a venerable gentlewoman, with all her sons, including the late Lord Inchiquin, came to Clonmel to aid and console the unfortunate man. I think I *felt* more

for O'Brien than for any client I ever had, because he was a gentleman, risking life for his opinions, and was, I thought, sincere.

'Do you remember that Sir W. Napier, of the Peninsular War, appeared at the table as a witness to prove that he was asked by one Young, a secretary, I believe, of Lord Melbourne's, to march on London from Birmingham, at the head of 200,000 men, to force the Lords to pass the Reform Bill? Of course the judges would not receive the evidence.

'My career in Parliament was the happiest and busiest in my life. I might have been a puisne judge long before I took the bench, but I declined, and remained enjoying the fight. The first important Bill I carried through Parliament—in which Palmerston supported me—was the consequence of what I saw in Smith O'Brien's case—to assimilate the practice here and in England, *i.e.*, to give full lists of the witnesses to the accused. But I cannot recount the many measures of a legal character I was engaged in. Then I prepared a "want of confidence" debate; I flared up, and, as Dizzy said, "*I fell before Kars.*"'

In my old Diary I find the shadows of two strange figures that many years ago were

flitting past—rather, sauntering past—in stately, majestic fashion, as became their rank. They have long since passed away, those brothers Sobieski — or, rather, the Counts D'Albanie — descendants of a royal line. It is not surprising that of late they and their story have been 'dug up,' for the public is highly romantic, and loves these mysteries. By-and-by, I have little doubt, there will be books written on the subject.

Many will recall the figures of the brethren, theatrical enough. The survivor of the twain, whom I knew well, lived only a street away, and was often to be seen promenading in his stately way from his quarters. in Alderney Street, Pimlico, I think it was. A singular figure indeed —tall, high-nosed, with peaked imperial, waxed moustache, ringlets flowing luxuriously over his ears and the back of his neck ; a richly frogged or braided military frock, not to be recognised in any way, covered with decorations—the Legion of Honour and the St. Esprit, or cross of St. Louis. Nor must we forget the clanking gold—so they seemed—spurs. The *gamins* and 'corner boys' were well accustomed to him, and not at all disposed to jeer. No doubt they felt a sort of awe. The other brother was more of the book-

worm cast — was all day pursuing certain researches in the Museum ; the theatrical side of the business, the wearing of orders, etc., was left to the other.

Not only the costume and bearing suggested 'the royal martyr,' but there was a strange tone of mystery in his conversation pointing in that direction. Some *mal-adroit* persons used sometimes to put questions, which were answered, or put aside with a gentle smile. It is certain that he had friends among the old Scotch nobility, who welcomed him at their mansions, and maintained the legend.

Another portion of his history, darkly alluded to, was that he had fought 'in the Young Guard' at Waterloo. Was all this a dream, or dreams? With him lived his daughter, the Countess Marie, a gentle, sweet being, in a consumption, worshipping her father and his traditions—a saint almost. They were poor, and must have had a sad and sore struggle to keep up appearances of state.

In time the gaunt, bookish brother passed away, then, I think, the poor girl, and finally the Count himself. I have before me the catalogue of his orders, jewels, royal miniatures, and the like, all put up to public competition. Mr. Hay-

ward, in an article of extraordinary severity, dealt with his royal claims in a rather coarse and unsparing fashion. He showed that the real name of the brothers was Allen, assumed abruptly. But as a point of argument this is nothing, and, in fact, rather supports the claim.

We may smile at these delusions, if delusions they were ; but there was something pathetic in the genuine faith with which their dream was cherished. To none was it more sacred than to the worshipping daughter. There were many, too, to fortify him—Scottish noblemen of Jacobite tendencies, who, it was said, rendered him stately, if not royal, honours.

It was curious to note the adroit fashion in which at dinners, to which he was often invited, he seemed to waive or put aside this question of his rank, at the same time asserting it. He was, as it were, in disguise, something like Prince Charles in the Highlands. At the same time, he was always an agreeable, amiable, and very pious man, who by repetition, as it were, had worked himself into a thorough belief in his august lineage.*

* The catalogue 'of his effects, properties,' etc., which were sold after his death in May, 1881, is sad reading enough,

A person who figured to a certain extent in the Irish coterie was the late Count de Jarnac. I always looked at him with much interest, as representing the fine old French Huguenot houses of Jarnacs and Chabots—to say nothing of the ever-memorable *coup de Jarnac*. He often

though from some Scarron-like cynic it might extract a hearty laugh. There was an ivory casket with fleur-de-lis; the Garter, with motto 'Honi Soit,' etc., which the auctioneers cautiously add 'is stated to have been given by Francis I. to Henry VIII., and containing jewels *long since disappeared*.' We should think so! 'The legend is that Henry VIII. gave it to Margaret, widow of James II. of Scotland, and it passed subsequently to Prince Charles Edward,' and from him, of course, to our Count. 'A piece of the blue riband of the Garter said to have been given by Charles I. on the day of his execution to Colonel Tomlinson.' Then came various locks of hair of the Pretender's, medals of the same; paste shoe-buckles, said to have been worn, etc.; the Garter, said to have been made by the Countess of Derwentwater, 'a devoted adherent of the Prince'; two small metal frames, one '*believed*' to contain a piece of the doublet from a tartan of one of the Prince's Highland followers, in which he disguised himself, the other 'a piece of the crimson velvet which formed the lining of the hilt of the Andrea Ferrara which the Prince carried at the battle of Preston Pans'; a splendid couteau de chasse, '*stated*' *to have been given* by Frederick the Great to Prince Charles Edward, as a *gage d'amitié;* Prince Charles Edward's *alleged* (cruel auctioneers!) ivory priming horn. The whole concludes with a number of articles 'said' to have belonged to the wife of Prince Charles Edward.

expatiated with an amiable pride on the glories of his ancestry. He was a tall, wiry man, with gentle eyes and a soft expression, and had a good deal of the French quickness and excitement, with a rather quavering voice. His tastes were literary, and he had written some successful novels, such as 'Rockingham, or the Younger Brother,' which were well received in fashionable circles, for he was connected by marriage with noble houses. His passion, however, was for private theatricals, given mostly at his own mansion, whereat the *pièce de résistance* was invariably one of his own dramas. These he printed in very elegant form; and though not very striking in either construction or dialogue—the former being almost wholly absent—on the Amphitryon principle, I suppose, which holds equally in theatrical matters, they were always received with 'unbounded applause.'

Not content with the glory of authorship, he assumed the leading *rôle* himself, which was usually that of an impassioned lover or knight. Being elderly and rather gaunt in figure, this did not forward the general sense of illusion. Still, there was such sincerity in his efforts, and he believed so thoroughly in the romance of his

situations, that it was impossible not to receive his efforts with cordiality. One of his pieces, called, I remember, 'The Lost One Restored,' turned on the incident of a picture of a lost love becoming animated; and our Count, arrayed in a tightly-fitting velvet jerkin, trunks, and hose, played with much feeling and intensity. A clever woman, the late Countess of Charlemont, was the heroine, who stood in a vast picture-frame, and gradually came to life, *à la Galatea*—a daring stroke of scenic effect, considering that the scene was in a small drawing-room, and the audience about a foot away from the so-called 'stage.' Such enthusiasm enlisted sympathy. He was, on the whole, an amiable, good-natured man, with a good deal of tact and French boyishness, which the native retains even to old age.

It was a wonderful turn of fortune when, shortly after the close of the Franco-German War, it was announced that our histrionic Count had been appointed Ambassador at the Court of St. James! The post was eminently suited to him, and he was delighted, as well he might be, to find himself at Albert Gate. Nor did he forget his old friends. He was, however, to enjoy his dignity for a very short time. One Levée or Drawing-

room day he walked home in his richly-adorned dress; the wind was sharp and biting, and he was seized with a pulmonary attack which carried him off. His friends were sorry for this genial and amiable man.

A few years ago there was to be constantly seen at the Athenæum Club a portly personage with a very striking head, his clothes hanging very loosely on him. This was Prince Lucien Bonaparte, who, indeed, might be recognised at a glance, from his striking likeness to his great uncle. He spoke English well, as, indeed, he did innumerable languages and dialects, but with a strange foreign pronunciation. In his eyes there was always twinkling a certain humour and Italian finesse. I remember his coming into the library to ask for the 'Memoirs of Count Horace de Viel Castel,' and, being told that it was 'not exactly a work for the drawing-room table,' he replied, with a truly Voltairean laugh, 'Ah hah! Dat will not do him moche harm!'

I have seen also, in Paris, the old Jerome, ex-King of Westphalia, then Governor of the Invalides. He was attending his nephew, who

a few years later was to be consigned a prisoner to the palace at Cassel, where Jerome had held his Court. I was struck by his tawny, sallow face, with the hooked nose and chin, which seemed to be trying to meet — a thoroughly Italian face. His son, the Prince Napoleon, I had often seen — once at Kingstown after he had landed from his yacht, where he strode about in rather imperious fashion, waiting haughtily while the natives were being interrogated, as though he were in an enemy's country.

That extraordinary woman, Madame Bonaparte Wyse, who had a life of adventure, I once saw at a trial, where she appeared in the witness-box. She had the same hooked nose and rather Jewish cast of countenance, and was carefully dressed for the performance. Her sons I also knew. One of them was a rather remarkable traveller and explorer, and, like Prince Lucien, was well skilled in local dialects.

One of the most striking pageants I ever witnessed was the funeral of the late Emperor of the French, at Chislehurst. It was one of those scenes that one would 'not have missed

seeing for anything'—a good test of interest. There was much that was theatrical about it, but it was certainly novel and original in all its elements. It was strange to find the South-Eastern trains overflowing at seven and eight in the morning with French ladies and gentlemen all in deep mourning, and carrying huge immortelles, wreaths of violet and blue, or still larger bouquets of the same colours; to be accosted by bowing old gentlemen, who requested to know the carriage for 'Ceezlehoorst' or 'Cezzlehure'; to find the little station, to its own surprise no doubt, converted into a sort of terminus, into which trains were steaming every quarter of an hour—as at Epsom Downs—and returning to town for fresh loads. There were mourning figures that trailed along the pleasant green lanes; the police sentries dotted along the sides at regular intervals; with the solemn look of the pleasant country-house peeping through its bower of trees, the tricolour half mast high, and mounted officers on duty at the gates. The ladies, almost to a lady, wore their neat little black capes, divided down the back; their husbands, and brothers, and lovers, the white tie and shiny black suit. Here, too, was the workman in his

cap and blouse, who had found his way hither somehow, and a spare-looking old abbé in a rusty cassock, bands, and shovel hat, walking along with that delightful absence of consciousness that such a costume would draw attraction, which is almost a virtue in the French character.

The morning of the interment was a delightful one. By nine o'clock crowds were scattered all over the common, and a whole army of police, mounted and on foot, seemed to be 'holding' possession of the place. They peered through the chocolate and gold gates of Camden Place, looked over the walls, pranced up and down the avenue, and hurried about in headlong expresses. They were massed in heavy bodies in front, and sent out in skirmishing order all along the road to the chapel, a charming little building prematurely old, though built but a short time, and nestling in a surtout of ivy. It was a little curious that the man round whom in his lifetime clustered the now exploded *sergents de ville*, in their neat little cocked hats, should even at his funeral have been zealously attended by a vast horde of these functionaries as chief mourners.

The crowd gathered and gathered; more trains arrived; and as eleven o'clock drew near, a thick

living avenue had formed which reached even to the chapel door. All stood patiently in a wide semicircle round the gate, nor was the long wait tedious, for there was a good deal to interest one. Two major-domos were on duty in front of the gate, arrayed in the favourite ball-dress, who performed prodigies of gesticulation and consultation, and, it may be added, of flourishing, as parties of French came up and introduced themselves and their tickets with the most graceful bows.

At last the gilt gates were thrown open, and every face was stretched inward, looking up the avenue. Then there was a prodigious hush. Never, indeed, was there a more orderly crowd—one more silent, respectful, or expectant. First came a group of French workmen in blouses and caps, unkempt, and almost dirty, most probably a genuine tribute of affection on the part of these honest sons of labour, but producing a theatrical effect; after whom walked a number of violet-robed priests with those worn, picturesque faces which so many of the French clergy present, most of whom wore medals and orders, having been almoners and chaplains at Court, or having attended the soldiers in the wars. Then the great

eight-horsed hearse came reeling out of the gates, one awful mass of nodding plumes, and riders, and walking mutes—the horses noble, glossy brutes—velvets, and escutcheons, and 'N's,' and armorial bearings covering it profusely. Loads of violet and yellow wreaths were piled up in every direction, and close behind an object of real interest, which drew from many a gentle female heart the exclamations: 'Oh, there he is!' 'Only look at him!' 'The poor, dear fellow!'—a graceful spare figure, with a broad crimson ribbon across his chest, and a face with a sort of 'wrung' expression, with his mother's tearful eyes, and a bright though nervous intelligence. A flutter went round, and an irrepressible excitement. Behind him walked the amazing counterpart of the greatest Napoleon—the livid face, the heavy head sunk between the shoulders, the portly frame; and then set in—most curious spectacle of all—the Bonapartists *en masse*, nearly two thousand strong. Here was Gramont, tall, pale, with the airs of old dandyism, but now decayed and 'used up'; the aged, 'puffy' Palikao, well braced up; the large swollen Le Bœuf, the slaty-eyed Frossard, the 'elegant' Maurice Richard—Fine Arts Minister for a few weeks—Paul Cas-

sagnac, the Bobadil of the French press, and the tribe of ejected prefects and senators, who in country districts used to propagate imperial ideas wholesale. The whole had the look of a stage procession, and the men an indescribable air, half histrionic, half adventurer—without offence be it said.

More interesting than the whole display was the somewhat wild and tearful face of the young heir, who must have been in truth friendless amid so many friends. Here was a real bit of nature. And it was significant that two stalwart and mounted police inspectors kept close to his side all the time. Behind him, too, must have walked the spectre of his fate, pointing to the far-off savage land where he was so soon to meet his doom.

There is a class of *spectacle* which to ordinary persons might seem to be a common show, but which has really the significance of an event in one's life, and in the history of the mind. Such, for instance, was the momentous completion of Cologne Cathedral. To the crowd this seemed merely a brilliant function—like the opening of the Tower Bridge : the Emperor was to be there

with his Court; and there would be effective ceremonies. The fine church, at last completed, would be 'well worth seeing'; and many sight-seers came to see it accordingly. But there was a far larger and more poetical view. Who would not think of the grand old choir, left unfinished since the thirteenth century, known to all travellers by the familiar crane on the tower, standing thus neglected and decayed until some fifty years ago, when the gigantic task of rebuilding and completing the whole was taken in hand! The story is almost romantic, and the most romantic incident was the discovery of the original plan in an old inn. The stretch between the years 1248, when the first stone was laid, and 1880, when the last was placed on the spire, seemed charged with dramatic interest. Here was the momentous day when the Cathedral stood complete. I felt irresistibly drawn to see it, and setting off the night before the ceremony, entered Cologne at daybreak next morning, when I wandered round the vast pile in solitude. It seemed all gleaming white. Never shall I forget that exciting and dramatic day. The arrival of the old, weather-beaten Emperor at the gates; his reception by the Dean and Chapter, who so coldly reminded him that

their Archbishop was in prison, owing to the 'May laws,' and could not receive him; the shouts; the music; the uniforms; the general excitement, with the background of the fine old city, its bridges, and noble river, made a picture that I would not part with for any consideration whatever.

BOOK II.

THE LITERARY LIFE

'Vita sine literis mors.'

CHAPTER I.

THE ART OF WRITING.

NOWADAYS everybody writes. It might almost be said that there are as many writers as readers. Writing has become a part of education, and people learn to write just as they learn music or languages. They write with great ease and fluency, and, on the whole, the writing is very good. This offers a curious contrast to the state of things about twenty or thirty years ago, when writing was supposed to be a sort of art or mystery which was confined to a few. Writers were then presumed to be like poets, born not made, to have come into the world with a special gift. There was a sort of coyness, too, or shyness, in letting it be known that you wrote, as though some sort of discredit attached to it.* And now it is, perhaps, forgotten that

* In which connection 'a *leetle* anecdote,' as the first Charles Mathews used to say. Some years ago a poor Irish-

nearly all the great writers were fond of shrouding themselves under fictitious names. Thus Dickens wrote as 'Boz'; Thackeray as 'Titmarsh'; Miss Brontë as 'Currer Bell;' Lever as 'Harry Lorrequer'; Miss Evans as 'George Eliot'; Bulwer as 'the Author of Pelham.' As success came, they gradually withdrew their masks. Of the ordinary crowd of writers, some courageously gave their real names, others none at all, and very many chose assumed ones.*

And yet the sort of familiar writing that now obtains—so facile that it might almost be said that 'he who runs may write'—cannot be exactly of the standard, high-class, informing article usually associated with 'writing.' What nearly

man was visited on his death-bed by a charitable lady, when he asked after a family whom he had known in his better days. 'And the poor ould mother,' he said, 'how did she get over *that?*' 'What?' was the reply. 'Oh, the son—the disgrace he brought on her! Didn't ye hear? Shure, *he tuk to writin' and broke her heart.*' I was the delinquent alluded to.

* To quote my own humble instance merely as a type of others, it seemed almost a matter of course that I should choose for my first novel an assumed name, that of 'Gilbert Dyce.' In other books I put no name at all on the titles; and 'Never Forgotten,' issued by Dickens, was announced as being by 'the author of "Bella Donna."' This system did not apply to historical or biographical works, which were assumed to be less "discreditable" as being less frivolous.

everyone can do with so little trouble cannot be worth very much. The general writing of the newspapers, the 'interviews,' the vivacious reports and descriptions which 'the new school' affects, are founded on *talk*, on colloquialisms, now 'free and easy,' now apparently rough and vigorous, the common phrases of talk, borrowed and written. Once this knack is learned, it becomes easy to 'write.'

But *real* writing is a different thing altogether—a difficult thing, requiring long training and good gifts. Not everything that comes into the head is to be set down. There must be selection. In short, the art must be studied and learned. It would really seem that the current notion of writing is to 'feel in the vein,' to find your pen moving rapidly, and ideas suggesting themselves as rapidly. The beginner, contrasting himself with so many who cannot put half a dozen sentences together, is so delighted to find that he can 'write' in this sense 'with a flow'—that is, string sentences together and cover pages with them—that he does not reflect that he is doing no more than a painter who has learned to lay on his colours, 'grounds,' etc.

And here it may be noted to how great an

extent what is called 'style' has passed away. There used to be a keen pleasure in 'style.' Style was relished, and writers were even read for the sake of it. How much, for instance, were Carlyle's queer, rugged sentences and German forms admired, debated, imitated! His sentences were quoted, and often smiled at, but they had their influence.

Of Macaulay, too, another stylist, how almost extravagant was the admiration! The melody, grace, and finish of his sentences were thought perfection. Yet now, as it seems to me, his reputation has begun to fade. Once his great admirer, I now cannot read him without feeling that there is a sort of insincerity and rhetorical exaggeration about him, everything being sacrificed to produce an effective, melodious sentence. His favourite and oft-recurring formula, 'No man was ever more, etc., yet no man was ever, etc.,' examples of which could be counted by the dozen in a single essay, and by thousands in his works generally, in itself convicts him of this exaggerated overstatement. Now we feel instinctively that no one who wrote in this theatrical vein would be tolerated.*

* I was at school when the great history came out, and well remember the enthusiasm it excited among both masters and

As I said, it was the same with Carlyle, whose mosaic compound of Germanisms and rugged forms was accepted as a matter of course, and even imitated to an extraordinary degree.

scholars. I was a frantic Macaulayan, and find in an old diary an account of my first perusal of his work, which, being natural and unaffected, may be worth quoting here. 'I, of course, could not hope to see the book until it had passed through many hands; but one memorable morning, of a recreation day, too, I discovered that the favoured "occupant" of the book was suddenly called to Preston, and would not be back till night. I waylaid him at the top of the stairs, just as he was setting off, "all booted and spurred," and earnestly begged for the precious volume during his absence. He was an enthusiast, too, and used to call the writer "The Great Babington." He good-naturedly gave it to me, with strict injunctions to restore it, and I was happy. Until dinner I pored over it in wonder and delight. Then I went out for a walk in the old Dutch garden by the circular pond and bowling-green, and sat down in the Dark Walk to read, and so on through the long day. When we had retired to our rooms for the night, I took to him again. My room looked out on the great playground, and on the old garden, where was an observatory. There were no shutters, and all lights were expected to be out by nine. One of the astronomers was sure to be at his work, and would be attracted by the light, so I could only devise this plan. I put my precious volume on the chimney, and bringing round the gas-jet, which was on a swivel, close to the book, reduced it till it was a small speck. A pasteboard screen was then fitted on. I set to work, and read on and on, with increasing delight, until past two in the morning, nearly finishing the volume.' Ah, those old days of enthusiasm!

To us his style seems a sort of 'curio,' and too elaborately artificial to be copied.

Nowadays, in this state of things, style seems scarcely to be wanted or understood. It is considered enough if you can express yourself with clearness and vigour.

And yet by this general facility of writing it cannot be said that the community is the gainer. A sort of dead-level of mediocrity has been attained which is monotonous, and gives little pleasure. There used to be an attempt at elevating and infusing a sort of poetical refining tone; now the attempt is in the other direction, at bringing down. Everything is described as it is in a newspaper, or as it is on the stage. The photograph is not art, and never can be art.

But, it will now be asked, how is the art of this real writing to be acquired? Many ways might be suggested, such as the copying of good models, like 'The Spectator,' or, better still, the studying of some work of fiction by Scott or Dickens, analyzing it, noting the *proportion* of the different parts, how a situation is treated and the dialogue managed. This last point is a most important one, as a writer with a gift for lively dialogue or repartee is apt to let himself be carried away

to inordinate lengths, to the prejudice of the situation, not having the heart to sacrifice his lively sentences. Scott was a perfect *story-teller*. His dialogue is always sufficient for the situation, and no more; a few sentences, speeches, and replies are full and abstract enough to convey the whole situation, whereas the less skilled moderns will take pages to develop the same idea. With Scott's narrative it is the same. He merely unfolded the essentials in a few expressive strokes, much as a newspaper scribe would give his report of some incident. Dickens introduced a highly minute treatment, and suspended his story to introduce episodes. But his books were a distinct genus, a combination of story with elaborate sketches of character.*

It is curious, too, that people should begin to write before they have learned any of the mechanism and practical part of writing. This they fancy they will learn by writing some work, a first one and intended to be published. This is as though a doctor were to learn his 'trade' and pick up his knowledge by practising on patients.

* Yet he had an unbounded admiration for the simple style of Scott, and I have heard him say that he preferred the 'Bride of Lammermoor' to all his other books.

It is obvious that much is gained if you come to the work thoroughly familiar with the art of expressing yourself easily and fluently, with your ideas trained to come obediently at command—in short, with as little thought of the mechanism of writing as a typewriter has of the place of the letter which he writes.

There is one simple, agreeable method for acquiring this elementary knowledge, a method which furnishes opportunities for useful practice before attempting serious work. This is the keeping of a diary, a full and, as I might term it, picturesque diary, in which you set down in the freest way your impressions of everything you see. You witness some stirring or picturesque scene, you visit a foreign town, you meet odd characters, you dine out, take part in a lively conversation: you strive to find out *why* these things have impressed or interested you, and what is their essential element.

Most people think that one day is very much like another, but if you take stock of your days you will see much that is new and original in each. Everything seen has a character, which can be found out, and with practice can be described.*

* Towns, for instance, have distinct characters, like men—Birmingham, Manchester, Bournemouth, Hastings, all can be

Now, to keep such a record, and to have done so from youth upwards, is the best way of learning to work. You can write in the freest way; you are without the feeling of responsibility, for no one will see your work; you can 'hit or miss,' you can let your pen gambol forwards or backwards; but, above all, you can attempt analysis of character, touch off human weaknesses, little vanities and follies, record the state of your own feelings, and discriminate why you like this, that, or the other. There is no more difficult thing than to find words for the description of mental impressions and emotions; and therefore it is, I say, that this system is invaluable for the person who would learn to write or would become a professional writer; for he not only gains thereby a complete command over words and sentences, which come obediently at his call, but acquires habits of observation and analysis, to say nothing of the pleasure of having such

discriminated; you can put down how each strikes you, and why. Even the different quarters of London can be thus differentiated, though to the superficial they appear 'much of a muchness.' Islington has one aspect, Mayfair another, Bayswater another. An unskilled person might have a dim conception of this, and yet be puzzled, without practice, to give his ideas shape.

a record to look back to—a record which ensures that life shall not altogether pass away like a weaver's shuttle.

There is a very common delusion as to what the real writing-man is, and how he works. It is popularly thought that he writes only when he is writing; that when he is moved to write he goes to his desk, reflects, looks at the ceiling in search of ideas, writes a sentence, thinks again, and so on to an end. But not such is the fashion in which the true writer works. He writes as he lives, moves, and has his being. His daily course of life is his writing. As he walks about and mixes with the general community, his busy, restless thoughts are at work, receiving impressions, developing them into shape, 'working them out,' making them fall into pictures. Any slight incident or suggestion may set in motion a train of thought, and develop into a character, story, or essay.

Thus is he most writing when he is *not* writing, and when he comes to his desk, merely the mechanical process is left of throwing the whole into words and sentences. The real work has been already done. It is like the plate which the photographer takes into his dark chamber and 'develops.'

It can scarcely be imagined what a charm this gives to life, what a movement and constantly-recurring excitement. It is a series of little dramas and pictures. Everything else seems flat and dull. Life without writing—that is, without this constant taking stock of things about us, and tracing out such poetry and philosophy as they contain—is tedious and uninteresting. I may confess that from a boy I have hardly ever let a day pass without writing something in this way. To me life would be incomplete without it, and it seems to be as necessary as meals or *talking*.

Zola tells us that the motto, 'Nulla dies sine linea,' is fixed up over his desk.

'From four to six pages of manuscript,' he says, 'of the size of a sheet of foolscap cut in half, is my average daily production. I write slowly, and with some difficulty, and always think out my sentences so carefully that there are few, if any, corrections in my manuscript. I should say that fifteen hundred words is my daily output. It is not much; but consider what that makes at the end of the year. When I have done what I consider a fair daily contribution, I throw down my pen, even if I be in the middle of a sentence; but the subject is so much in my mind that the next

morning I can resume the thread of my composition, even without reading over any part of what precedes.'

But here, again, we encounter the 'rusting realism.' Persons who do not *read* the things that are about them, and search for their inner meaning, are realists. For them outside objects have a monotony. One street, to them, is the same as another, and they are eager to abridge their passage from one to the other as much as possible, taking cabs, etc.

But the *writer* finds in the streets a perpetual and varied entertainment, a kaleidoscope of shifting character, and something novel always turning up. For, as I said, there is a meaning underlying everything, an inner essence, if we can only penetrate to it.

An illustration from my own experience will show better than any amount of theory how this 'stock-taking' of life, trivial as it seems, may be carried out. It is a trifle, no more than a visit to a busy railway-station. The scene is at Charing Cross; the time, evening, when the Continental trains are starting. Here is the fashion in which I read it.

There is a strange, not undramatic, feeling in

standing on the broad area under the huge iron-girdered roof, and watching the ceaseless passing and repassing, the hurrying in and out, the endless variety of expression. Yet there is, too, an odd tranquillity, which seems somehow associated with the placid influence of the huge bookseller's stall, which never ceases business, and sells something every second.

Facing us are the barriers, the central one of which it is hardly fanciful to look on as The Gates of the World, for through it men and women are hurrying to and from the four corners of the earth. Beside it are smaller gates leading to suburban towns and districts; and on the right, the traveller's momentary rest, the Custom House. In this strange mill the work goes on day and night, with calm placid grinding, filling and discharging its 'hoppers.' A sort of railing is drawn across the area as the crowd increases, on which I lean and survey the curious panorama.

I wish I could describe the endless shifting varieties of face and figure that pass before me, writ large. Here is the fluttering and agitated family, uncertain of everything, suspicious of everything, and scarcely knowing whether they are 'on head or heels'; the shrill, feather-headed,

parasol-poking ladies, in broad hats and skimpy dresses, who are 'going abroad' to furnish ridicule to the French caricaturists. And here, too, are the worn, harassed paterfamilias—on whom lies a weight of care as he looks helplessly at his property and at his many children; the active busy curate going abroad to enjoy himself for the winter; the young quartet—two 'nice' girls in light dust-coats, attended by their brothers or cousins, the youths in knickerbockers and with knapsacks, the girls with a small portmanteau: happiness and light-heartedness are written on *their* faces.

The weighing and labelling—all part of the pleasure—are done in a few moments, and they pass on through the World's Gate, never to be seen, by me at least, again! Here is an agitated group of flourishing, gesticulating foreigners, two Frenchwomen chattering and screaming like parrots. The Charon of the Gate is, I note, a cheery being. who snips at his tickets, and points right or left. Beyond him all seems misty and indistinct.

There is something melancholy in this never-ending passage of persons whom we have never seen before, and shall never see again, passing out of sight, we know not whither, their baggage

trundled in and wheeled out, to be consigned to the deft ticket-porter, whose life is spent in labelling, and who seems particularly to relish 'dabbing' his bits of paper on the neatest and newest trunks.

What a physiognomy, by the way, in baggage! You can speculate with something like certainty as to the owners. This brown, much-battered, but stout and well-braced portmanteau, with the neatly-strapped 'bundle,' belongs surely to the careful, comfortable, travelled bachelor. And here he comes himself, a thoughtful man, of few words, duly impressing the porter, who shows more reserve than usual in his labelling, as though this were a person not to play tricks with.

Next will roll by slowly a perilously-piled-up load—vast nickel-bound chests below, graduated leathern and metal boxes above, which go swaying and tottering to the scale. The wealthy family—'the girls,' papa and mamma, and the son—are all bound for the Continent. Round such the porters cluster like flies; all assist in some way, 'encumbering with help,' and all are more or less welcome. Shillings are dispensed plentifully. Better still for them 'the omnibus' folk—

the American travellers with their load of huge brass-bound trunks, that have to be counted over and over again.

Meanwhile the rows of trucks with their legs or arms in the air go on lengthening, drawn up in lines; the owners drop in hurriedly, and glance nervously at the long array, as though fearful that their property had been abstracted in the interval, but are reassured. As the departure-hour draws near, the formalities at the little pigeon-hole are hurried over; then the trucks are gradually trundled off, the chattering groups of travellers, after much flitting to and fro, gradually lessen and disappear one by one.

And now the hand of the big clock is nearly touching the hour, a stray traveller or two come hurrying up to their recumbent trunks, which are rapidly trundled off. For the last few seconds there is a complete lull, save for a late-lingering passenger, who comes rushing in headlong, and whom all hands join to help. He is ignominiously hurried through the gate.

A solitary portmanteau is left alone in its glory, the object of many speculative glances from the porters. Some helpless one has mistaken the hour, or has lingered too long a-dining, and

is at this moment frantically careering along Piccadilly in a hansom cab. He comes not, and will not come, in time; for it is the rarest thing in porterial experience to 'save your train.' The official starter of the place appears with his giant dinner-bell, and clangs out 'Go!' Charon gleefully and hurriedly twists round his signal-lamp to green; with a charitable thought for the overdue late-comer, he gives one last glance round, then finally closes the Gates of the World. There is a sudden stillness, a far-off shriek, a sound of rumbling, and the load of travellers for France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Egypt, India, are on their way.

Precisely at this moment comes panting in the belated traveller. His blank face is a study; but he is condoled with, advised, instructed by the sympathizing porters, and at last ruefully walks away behind his property to seek shelter somewhere for the night and be in better time next morning.

All this little ceremonial leaves, somehow, a melancholy impression, and I find myself thinking of the mournful 'Vision of Mirza' in the *Spectator*, when everyone is hurrying over the bridge and dropping through the unseen holes. Yet it

shows also what an entertainment is to be found in the common sights of everyday life.*

There are innumerable pictures of the same pattern to be seen about us which have this inner essence or meaning for all who can penetrate to it. The history of any ordinary private family, if set forth naturally and without affectation, might be as interesting as any novel. Indeed, it has been happily said that every man 'has a book in him, if he only knew how to write it.' Think of the different characters there are in a family, their manifold ideas, interests, adventures, virtues, and foibles. These things interest us if related even in talk; how much more would they do so judiciously described!

There are many interesting questions connected with this art or mystery of writing which show at least how many difficulties are associated with it. Here is one: In writing a novel, should

* This 'meditation,' as I may call it, was virtually *written* as I looked on. It was copied, as it were, from the 'tablets of the memory' when I got home, and was in the *St. James' Gazette* an evening or two later. Thus, if you cannot impart your own thoughts to others *viva voce*, and seem a solitary stranger to the crowd, you can speak in this fashion. It is always an agreeable feeling to find your own dreams presented to you again in new shape.

the story or the characters come first? That is to say, should the story engender the character, or the character the story? The common idea is, first get your story, then fit in your characters by way of decoration. But the truth is, if you hit on a really fruitful character, it is in itself a story, and this is according to the analogy of common life, where we find a marked character actually creates the situations and events around it. A wise person moulds and controls events to his purpose; a foolish person, from his weakness, is only the helpless victim of events.

For instance, you start with a character like Mr. Pickwick, an amiable credulous being, who would naturally fall into the complications that await credulity, simplicity, and amiability combined. Having got such a character, the writer, if he be at all inspired, sees him in all kinds of situations, and knows exactly what he will do, even hears what he will say.*

* I find that my friend Mr. Pinero holds the same view in the writing of his pieces: 'In the first place, I have very little to do with plot so called. I start my plays always from the point of view of making a study of the characters. I get into my mind a conception of the persons I want to present on the stage, and from those characters I frame a story; that is to say, if those persons that I imagine will help to create a story. I

And, again, whence are writers to draw their conversations? We all know Boswell's admirable record of Johnson's talk. But this was not, as many suppose, a mere stenographic or literal report. He abstracted and selected the essence, discarding all those superfluous repetitions and conventional purposeless remarks which are uttered mechanically in conversation, as it were, to gain breathing time. He cut away and left out all that was unessential.*

Indeed, there is nothing in life more entertaining or more dramatic than the observation of character. Wherever we go we can see what are called touches of character. I often amuse myself, in an omnibus even, filling out, as it were, and developing, a character thus presented, though only some trifling indication may be offered, or some slight expression or gesture

work from character, and not from plot. I imagine my characters and their idiosyncrasies, and make them create their own story.'

* A very intelligent actor, Mr. Crane, who has written on play-writing, has shown that 'sparkling dialogue' is not a thing apart, or a distinct gift, as is commonly supposed. It is 'a neglectable quantity.' The situation alone, if it be strong 'and felt' by the writer, will engender suitable dialogue, just as a street dispute will cause the parties to talk in a strain exactly suited to the situation.

may be the only hint given. This is invaluable for the novelist; and here it may be taken for granted that every vigorous, well-drawn character that we meet in fiction is to a certainty drawn from life. To give another personal illustration, I myself have written some thirty novels, each containing a score of characters, and I can say that every one of these has been directly or indirectly taken from life.

But there is a process even of utter transformation, so that the character is often hardly recognisable. A fertile imagination, duly trained, will out of a phrase, or a look even, construct a whole story or character. Once I went down to one of those curious institutions familiarly called 'hydros,' where I stayed literally but a few hours. During that period the whole anatomy of the society unfolded itself. I saw all the characters of the place, how they must act and react upon each other, the contentions and factions—what must happen and must be done, in short. Later I wrote a chronicle of such a place—a story in one volume—in which persons who had been there recognised a picture of the society, declaring that all that was described, if not exactly alike, was nearly alike or analogous, and that the characters

were exact. How often a well-meaning person comes to tell a story that 'will just do for you,' or to describe a character which 'ought to be put in a book!' You listen to the story and the eccentric traits; but as they strike the narrator they are valueless, and if 'put in a book' would have no effect. There may, however, be a suggestion of something wholly different; and I have literally often owed to such promptings a story and characters which the suggester would not recognise.

In these modern days, where everything is earthy and made up of details, or 'realism,' as it is called, it is sometimes thought that character can only be conveyed by words and speeches. This may be one cause of the present decay of the drama, where we find smart dialogue, as it is called, substituted for strokes of character. Character, as we know, exhibits itself by action, by bearing, and in a hundred different ways; it requires an intimate acquaintance with character to know what expression will be appropriate in any particular situation. But it will not do to copy, or merely to transfer what has been observed to the page or story. There is a regular artistic process, a sort of transmutation, to be followed, in which is shown

the skill of the writer. In familiar life, for instance, he will meet some grotesque being, someone with odd phrases and odd forms of speech, which a person unskilled in writing might think it sufficient to transfer directly to his page. But the mere hint is enough for the skilled writer. His imagination will be kindled ; he will see the character before him in other and far more telling situations, and he will be able to know *how* he will speak in each situation.

I remember Mr. Dickens telling me that he was constantly receiving grotesque stories and suggestions of all kinds from strangers, which, as they thought, were 'exactly suited to his gifted pen.' Nearly all these were worthless, and not at all 'suited to his gifted pen,' because the reporters had not penetrated to the *essence* of the character, but had merely sent him what was on the surface. They were familiar with the person, and from personal acquaintance knew an abundance of other details, of which, however, the 'good thing' sent supplied no idea. This is frequently the case with good stories, the effect of which often depends on the life and character of the figure.

The original of our old friend Mr. Micawber was in the habit of using flourishings like those

which are so exquisitely ludicrous in the novel; yet in the novel there is hardly a sentence or a phrase which was actually used. Still, we feel a certainty that every phrase, or something like it, *would* have been used by the original had he found himself in the situations described by the novelist. The reason was that Dickens had put himself 'inside of the character,' as it were, and felt how such a character ought to speak on each occasion.

Take the case of another old favourite. I have no doubt that Dickens heard some female use one of the grotesque forms of speech that have given immortality to Mrs. Gamp, but I am certain that that worthy original never used a single phrase that is set down in the novel. I can fancy his working in this way: A single sentence of the pattern of 'A lady which her name is Harris' furnished the key to the whole. He had never heard the original talk of the Antwerp packet, but he felt by a sort of divination that she must have called it 'the Ankworks packidge.' Then he would ask himself what would be the profession that would best exhibit and develop this lady's peculiarities, and he settled on that of a monthly nurse, which was likely enough not the original

one. Such changes are artistic and necessary, and add prodigiously to the effect.

We hear a good deal about the originality of stories, and how few original ones there are, and how one writer copies from another, etc. But the truth is, there is no original story, and no new situation. The originality consists in the treatment, and in the characters which are the subject of that treatment. The same series of events under different handling becomes quite a different story and an original one. Take the well-known novel of 'Jane Eyre.' There we have a violent, tempestuous man who is in love with his strange, interesting governess. They are about to be married, when it is discovered that he has a mad wife imprisoned in his house. Now, I venture to say that if this skeleton were given out to half a dozen writers of genius to treat, we should have as many different stories, all more or less original and altogether different, because treated from different points of view. As Miss Brontë wrote it, we have everything from the point of view of the dependent. In fact, the whole story is the character of Jane Eyre herself, her hopes and fears and her history. Rochester is a violent, tempestuous man; but viewed through her eyes,

he becomes that interesting being, a hero. Now if we suppose that Rochester were to tell the story, we should have a wholly different narrative, and a wholly different view of Jane Eyre herself. The wife incident would almost disappear, and he would naturally put his own situation in the fairest light. Again, the wife might tell the story, which would give an entirely new view, Jane Eyre in her eyes taking the shape of a scheming, intriguing woman. And, finally, the story might be related by an impartial bystander, the ordinary narrator indifferently looking on at the doings of all concerned. This would be a completely new version, as he would not be in the mind of any of the characters, and Jane Eyre's thoughts, fancies, and self-examinings would all disappear.

'Or another way,' as Mrs. Glasse would put it. The same sequence of events might be retained, but there might be an entirely new set of characters placed in another sphere altogether. This would develop altogether new mental situations. Or suppose we take the story of 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' following the course of events exactly, but placing the scene in our own day, having a doctor instead of a vicar. The tale might be treated so as to be unrecognisable.

Thus, as I say, there would be half a dozen views of the same story, all different.

A very interesting question here suggests itself, viz. : What is the actual attitude of the story-teller in relation to the story he tells? It is assumed that he has a sort of omniscience, can see into every mind, penetrate into every household like Asmodeus, that he is familiar with the past, and can even forecast the future. But to these powers some limit must be placed, if we would have a *probable* story. I fancy the real narrator should be like the historian, who gathers his evidence from all quarters, and forms a narrative out of such materials, or, like the audience 'sitting at a play,' which simply notes what is passing before it. The knowledge of the interior motives, emotions, plans, purposes, and the like should be such as a shrewd, experienced observer of human nature and character will be able to gather for himself from the outward behaviour of others. In proportion as this principle is carried out will the story be natural and striking. The autobiographical method in good hands is always dramatic, for it not only supplies the proceedings of the general actors, but tells us how they affect the individual mind.

Still, there is the difficulty that the autobiographer is obliged to 'go everywhere,' and in all directions, to come in contact with the characters, and thus carry on the action. He must take part in every transaction, or have it related to him, in defiance of probability.

There is only one instance, I believe, of an attempt to combine both methods, viz., Dickens's 'Bleak House,' where we have Esther Summerson's 'personal narrative' alternated with that of the story-teller himself. This, however, seems to be virtually a narrative given by *two* story-tellers; and though the reader has the story put fully before him by the double process, he himself has to combine the parts together into a whole, just as a barrister will form his tale out of the various pieces briefed. I suspect that before the close this gifted author found himself a good deal embarrassed by this twofold method.

Wilkie Collins, as I have shown, delighted in introducing housekeepers' and other persons' 'narratives' or journals, a rather clumsy device, for no one has a gift of keeping a journal exactly in the form in which a novelist would write. Even Miss Burney, who gives scenes with such dramatic point, described them in letters addressed

to other persons, and was not taking notes for herself. There are some novels, by the way, which are thrown into the form of a number of letters, notably the immortal series describing Clarissa Harlowe's sufferings. But the difficulties of such a process are enormous, and in Richardson's case the result is not a novel, but a record and study of character.*

And now, as to the mechanism of writing, there arises this question: Should one write fast or slow, let the pen go racing over the page, scarce able to keep up with the ideas, or write slowly and with careful thought and deliberation? The

* 'Clarissa' is assuredly one of the most *awful*, real books in the world. Admiring as I do its exquisite art and its vast, almost Æschylean power, I sometimes find myself, when wishing to re-read it, shrinking from the shelf on which it stands, and putting off the perusal to another night as too tremendous and agonizing a business. The extravagant length of the story has been objected to, but with a real appreciation of the author we could spare nothing. Many years ago the late Mr. Dallas—an eminent critic, but better known as the husband of Miss Glyn, the actress—prepared an abridged edition in three volumes, for which the firm of Tinsley were spirited enough to give him an enormous sum. It proved, however, to be too strong meat for the public. Miss Glyn I have met, and was struck by her fine, almost massive, cast of features and imposing figure. She had a stately way of speaking, too, as befitted our 'only Cleopatra.'

first system, it is obvious, secures vividness and animation and a dramatic spirit; the invention and imagination are equally quickened. You yourself become an actor in the scene. It is said that what is written with spirit is read with spirit. 'If you wish me to weep, you must weep yourself.'* It is extraordinary how the inspiration works. A conversation is going on; when you imagine a speech uttered by one of your characters, you have the fitting answer ready, and the reply to that again. You don't invent or compose these speeches. You *hear* them, as though someone were at your elbow *whispering* into your ear. They come as if told to you; a few moments before you knew nothing of them—all which is part of the mystery of this delightful craft of writing. Many writers have found the value of this momentum, and all their most spirited and exciting passages have been written at a single heat.

* Once a large mass of papers was put into my hands, out of which I was to fashion a biography. All the facts, letters, etc., were there, but I knew little or nothing of the hero. This was a sort of 'pot-boiler,' for we have 'pot-boilers' in the writing life as well as in painting. I hold that one should never decline a commission of this kind. The thing was wanted in a hurry. I, moreover, became interested as I wrote, and completed my task, writing with a flying pen, in the short space of four days.

Thus Harrison Ainsworth, when he wrote his brilliant 'Dick Turpin's ride to York' in 'Rookwood,' sat up the whole night till dawn, when, as he said, he seemed to have ridden over every foot of the ground.*

The literary instinct is often wonderfully potent, and occasionally akin to a sort of *afflatus*; by its aid one often reaches almost to the unknown. When writing speculations on some perplexing personage, historical or otherwise, I have taken stock of some familiar character of my own circle, who, in some curious, unexpected fashion, would supply something akin to the original situation, or some sort of solution. We can thus read the past by the aid of the present. I believe that the secret of Meissonier's wonderfully vital pictures is

* There are curious idiosyncrasies connected with the mechanical operation of writing. Some cannot write when others are by, or when anyone is in the room; others can write anywhere—in a crowd, on their hats even. Between the acts at the theatres we see critics hurriedly scribbling their notices, quite indifferent to observation. Some can use the typewriter, others cannot. The latter have a feeling that the *writing* of the words aids the flow of ideas, whereas typewriting becomes a sort of dictation. It is like making a speech to it. And there are numbers who cannot dictate: it *coagulates* their ideas. They are oppressed by a sort of shyness—owing to the presence of another. I confess that I could not dictate even a letter.

found in some process of this kind. We know, for instance, his dramatic group of the peasant brought before the officers to give information. The common painter's method would be to collect 'models,' dress them up in the old-fashioned dresses, make the officers haughty, the peasant frightened. But Meissonier, I believe, would call on his vivid imagination; he would throw himself into the scene, fancy himself present. This inspection would suggest attitude, expression, etc. A more potent aid to suggestion would be some situation of ordinary life somewhat analogous, some situation of difficulty which he had chanced to see. Such would supply the key to others of the same kind. This is a recipe often used in writing stories or characters.*

Another question: Would the matter and treat-

* Thus, in a 'Life of George IV.,' which I wrote some years ago, I had to reconstruct, as it were, according to such lights as I possessed, a well-known character of the time—Sir Henry Holland, the physician at the Court, and for some short time confidant of the unlucky Queen Caroline. I had been much struck with the esteem in which he was universally held, and his weight of character. I admired his writings, and his own modest and entertaining book of recollections. He seemed to come so vividly before me that I could not help presenting him as a sort of living figure whom I might have personally known. Not long after the book appeared I re-

ment be exactly the same were it rewritten, say, a fortnight later? I remember a portion of a novel which I had written being lost in the post. I had to rewrite it; but the lost packet was recovered, and I found that there was little variation. It depends a good deal on the animated mood and spirit with which the rewriting is done. If you have grown torpid, and shrink from this task—and there is nothing more odious than rewriting, going over the same ground—the new matter will be dull and heavy. I once wrote a story called 'Jenny Bell,' which was the second portion of the history of a lady of that name. There were three novels unfolding her history, 'Bella Donna,' 'Seventy-five, Brook Street,' and 'Jenny Bell'—eight volumes in all. Naturally, I girded myself up for the finale, 'The Trot for the Avenue,' and remember that I sat up till the gray dawn came,

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ceived from his son, the present Lord Knutsford, what was, for a writer, a very gratifying compliment. 'I have reached,' he wrote, 'in your very interesting book, the passage relating to my father, and I cannot refrain from sending you a short note to thank you for your pleasing notice of him. You have done him full justice, but I can conscientiously say not more than justice; I think you have given a very accurate sketch of the main features and charm of his character and manner.'

'finishing off' the heroine—very tragically, and, as it appeared to me, with due dramatic fire. This, amounting to nearly a third of a volume, never came to the printer's hand. But the press was waiting, and professional writers will well understand the sort of nausea with which I had to sit down and recommence the sorrows of the heroine. In this process you find yourself not inventing, but struggling hopelessly to recall the incidents and dialogue, etc. Once, however, the old interest and excitement is revived, you are safe. One happy five minutes, the mysterious psychological moment, and the thing is done. You are launched, and confidence in yourself is restored. On the other hand, if this blessed inspiration be denied you, you must go dragging your clogged steps through a bog almost Cimmerian.

I believe this second finale was better than the first; and I was later told that my guide, friend, and good genius, Dickens, pronounced it to be very powerful and striking.*

It is curious, too, to think how much the writer is the creature of his own powers of conception and imagination. It is impossible to *direct* him to

* I am proud of such praise from such a man, though I know at what risks I record it here.

write a book on a particular plan, or story, or method. He must write as he is inspired. It was thus that people used to lament that Dickens did not 'write a second Pickwick,' or something in the same style. The reason was, he *could not* do it. His mind was full of other ideas, and of another system of treatment. Pickwick *came* to him, he did not go to Pickwick. And here is a great rock ahead for the novelist—the delusion that what you write with pleasure and enthusiasm must please others. But the wary, well-practised writer will always ask himself whether this particular treatment of a passage will take with his public. It is an utter mistake to write, as it is called, over the heads of your readers, or to prolong the dialogues which seem to you to be so full of point.

In the same fashion, authors will often write a vast amount of copy, and then divide their work into chapters. Now, this is an unscientific and inartistic method. A chapter should be a complete episode, like an act in a play ; it should have a beginning, a development, and a finale. All who write for periodicals are obliged to look to this, and to put something stirring into each portion, or they are likely to lose their hold of the

reader's attention. It should be borne in mind, too, that the reader somewhat resembles Mr. Hardcastle in the comedy. He likes everything that is old, and what he has heard before; and, provided the form be a little varied, he cannot hear it too often—just as in music he is never tired of 'Home, sweet home' or 'Auld lang syne.' An old prompter at Drury Lane, when asked as to the best method of hitting the taste of an audience, used invariably to reply, 'Sir, you must first tell them what you are going to do, and tell them several times. Then you must tell them that you are doing it, then that you have done it; and then, by-and-by, perhaps they will begin to understand you.'

In writing a story there are authors who do not plan the course of events in advance, because they do not know them; but they write on, certain that some ingenious complication will suggest itself—in short, the *story is to write itself.* I confess, I believe in, and rather follow, this system, for the reason that the incidents seem more like real life, where the *unexpected* so often happens, and where events turn up in a capricious way. However this may be, I have always found that everything depends on getting well started—that

is, started with such eagerness and enthusiasm that you could sit down then and there and write on and on to the end. Others deliberate and potter, as it were, hover on the brink, hesitating to make the plunge; the moment of departure put off and put off; and when at last a start is made, it becomes a task and a drudgery, and is virtually no start at all, because it is so laboured and uninspired that you feel you have not begun.

Nothing, indeed, is more agonizing, almost, than those seasons of stagnation that come on the unpractised writer, when the words and sentences are wrung from him almost like drops of blood, when he loathes his work, and feels that all he has done is worthless. The practised 'hand' who is always writing feels nothing of this. He is just as ready and fluent at one time as at another. I would almost undertake at this moment, provided I were allowed a few seconds' thought to get a fair start, to sit down and write off a story, without knowing in the least what to write about, trusting, as I said, to the certainty that interesting incidents would come to me, that I should not have to go and look for them. The Latin proverb, 'Dimidium operis qui cœpit habet,' is invaluable, not only in

writing, but in the ordinary affairs of life. It means :

'Once begun
Half is done.'

That is to say, once you are at work, the end comes into view, or you are being carried towards the end ; whereas *going* to begin does not lead to actual beginning. It is like going from Dover to Calais : once you leave the Dover shore, you see the French coast beginning to draw near.

And in this connection, it may be said, the selection of a *name* has a curious influence on the treatment of characters in fiction. A badly-selected name, one that does not 'fit,' is a drag from the beginning. It is a perpetual hindrance ; it seems as though a wrong person had somehow *got in.* On the other hand, a really good name actually inspires and becomes the character. Good names should be rather colourless and unobtrusive, certainly not at all descriptive of the character, like Sir Pertinax Macsycophant and Lydia Languish of the old plays. Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord F. Verisopht are, I think, the only instances of this kind of name in Dickens's stories. Most of the characters in 'Pickwick' are admirably chosen ; than 'Perker' for a solicitor

nothing could be better. So with Wardle and other Pickwickians, Bob Sawyer and his friend Bardell, and the rest. It was strange that in his later works he should have adopted such artificially made names as Chuzzlewit, Turveydrop, Tulkinghorn, etc.*

* Vincent Crummles and all his company—the Lenvilles, Folairs, etc., are simply perfect as representative names. There is a deeper philosophy in all this than would appear at first sight. Zola has the same feeling of nicety about this point. 'I judge writers,' he says, 'by the propriety and sonorousness of their names. I believe that a kind of sympathy exists between people and their names, and *that certain characters must be called so, and not otherwise.*' Like Dickens, who would religiously consult the lists of school children, etc., he will spend a whole day turning over the parish directory in search of what he wants. 'Rougon is a common name in the South, and has a pompous ring about it. Macquart I chose because it is in contrast with Rougon, and has something base and popular about it.' Balzac revelled in his own 'Z. Marcas.' Mr. Shandy, it will be remembered, laid even more stress on the point.

CHAPTER II.

STYLE, OLD AND NEW.

NOTHING is more curious than the change of style in writing which has imperceptibly taken place. Dickens's fanciful, imaginative style, illustrated by quaint conceits, seems to have gone out.

All our periodicals and magazines, and they are legion, overflow with what are literally transcripts of the earthy details about us. Buildings are described minutely, so are people at home or abroad; dresses, pictures, books, etc., are all treated in this fashion. One journal gave us lately a photograph made out of half a dozen photographs of distinguished persons all fused together into one face. Nothing more absurd or infantine could be imagined; and the best of it is that with this overpowering mass of details there is no actual picture furnished. As in the case of

statistics, figures and details, however abundant, are of little value until they are grouped and marshalled, and conclusions drawn from them. A person describes a face to you, and gives a minute auctioneer's inventory of all the features, colouring, length of nose, etc. ; but we have no clear idea of the face. Another dashes off a bold sketch in a single sentence and brings the face before us ; he has generalized and seized on its essential-character.

This is really the object of writing, *to furnish us with something that we cannot supply to ourselves.* It is the secret of the attraction of the great masters of writing, who find out and tell us what poetry is hidden in things.

In considering the present estimation of Dickens as a writer, it is likely enough to be forgotten that past generations were, as it were, 'reared upon Dickens,' and trained almost from childhood to know, admire, and follow his work. They travelled with him through their lives ; every new work of his was a contribution to their enjoyment and happiness. But the present generation knows not Dickens in this fashion : it looks on him as belonging to a past race of writers, and it reads him much as 'well-

informed' cultured persons would read Miss Burney's or Miss Austen's novels. He has to be read, too, with a certain effort, and under certain difficulties, the allusions growing obscure, the incidents of social life being utterly changed, the phrases obsolete.

But, above all, there has been a complete change of *style*, realism having taken the place of the old, fanciful, sentimental fashion of presenting things. It may be said that no one now is much interested in style; that is, in the manner of presenting things to the reader. In our matter-of-fact age it is the *things* themselves that are desired. This we can see at once if we take up any of the popular magazines, such as the *Strand*, the *Century*, and the like, where everything that is material in social life is described with the minuteness of an auctioneer's catalogue.

Lately, reading Zola's 'Le Débacle,' with its vivid horrors of war, hospital operations and life, I asked myself what was the secret of the attraction of this coarse realism, and it flashed on me that it was a simple imitation of the newspaper's 'own reporter' style. It gave in unimpassioned, business-like fashion such details as, say, a '*Star* man' would gather after visiting the

scene of a sensational murder or fire. There is the same momentary interest or curiosity excited. It is information somewhat coloured up. It is what we should see for ourselves were we on the spot. But this surely is not 'writing.' 'Writing,' it seems to me, is the supplying of something that the reader cannot supply: the associations, the poetry, the philosophy of what is treated; the inner meaning, with something like a moral. This was Dickens's fashion. What he touched he elevated and tried to ennoble, or to associate with something immaterial. For this sort of thing we do not much care now, or it has to be treated in a department specially allotted to it.

Let us take this little story in illustration. A poor struggling musician has his darling fiddle, the work of some rare master, which he clings to in spite of all privations. After long and hopeless waiting, a chance comes when he may be heard. But just as he is about to play, a buzzing noise is heard, there is a faint, almost imperceptible crack, which destroys the sound. Zola might deal with this theme in his realistic fashion, dwelling on the varnish, the exquisite tender tones, the fine tints, the beautiful contour.

He would describe the 'scroll.' It would be all but human, just as Sheridan said Whitbread's description of the phœnix would be 'a poulterer's description of a phœnix.' But Tennyson would have touched the theme in different fashion, in the familiar, oft-quoted lines:

> 'The little rift within the lute
> Which by-and-by will make the music mute.'

In this exquisite suggestion we have the poetry of the thing. The 'cracked fiddle' would be ennobled, because associated with human life, and the first little falling out between those who love each other. I never see a fiddle without recalling these lines. Or take the homely sea-shell we find on a cottager's chimney-piece—a common convolute thing; and a child, applying it to his ear, will say he hears the roaring of the waves. But Landor ennobles it, telling us how

> 'It remembers its august abodes,
> And murmurs, as the ocean murmurs there.'*

* The whole passage is worth quoting:

> 'But I have sinuous shells of pearly hue
> Within, and they that lustre have imbibed
> In the sun's palace-porch, where, when unyoked,
> His chariot-wheel stands midway in the wave.

Prose writing should, as I said, furnish something of this kind to the reader—something that he cannot supply for himself. Here Dickens excelled. He associated something living and something ennobling with all his minutely described objects. Nothing was pictured by him for the stupid object of mere description. Nothing is, indeed, gained by *mere* description, for the

> Shake one, and it awakens, then apply
> Its polished lips to your attentive ear,
> And it remembers its august abodes,
> And murmurs, as the ocean murmurs there.'

With these lines it is no less profitable than interesting to compare Wordsworth's treatment of the same theme in the third book of the 'Excursion':

> 'I have seen
> A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
> Of inland ground, applying to his ear
> The convolutions of a smooth-tipped shell,
> To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
> Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
> Brightened with joy, for from within were heard
> Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
> Mysterious union with his native sea.'

These are often-quoted passages, it is true, but I do not remember to have seen them in juxtaposition. The importance of *arrangement* in selections of poetry is often lost sight of. Mr. Palgrave's extremely popular 'Golden Treasury' owed much of its success to the skilful arrangement whereby the various poems were made to illustrate each other.

original object can be seen at any time, and has a far better effect.

Charles Dickens was certainly the popular novelist of our nineteenth century. His popularity was beyond that of Sir Walter Scott, for he was universally read and known; whereas the Waverley novels were chiefly read by 'the superior, educated classes.' And yet Dickens's 'literary baggage' was comparatively small. He may be said to have written only thirteen novels, whereas Scott wrote more than double that number. But it will be found that he wrote almost as much again in the shape of short tales, essays, light sketches of places and passing incidents; while for nearly twenty years the bulk of his time and labour was devoted to the management of a weekly journal, which he directed, inspired, and coloured with his own intense personality.

His *penchant* was for periodical work. There he was at his best, and showed all his strength. His quick, vivid instinct saw the whole of a situation or an incident, and threw it at once into dramatic shape, and this pictorial spirit sustained him to the end.

Dickens was essentially an observer of human nature and character, and of scenes of social life generally; and so full was he of this fashion of study, that he may be said to have invented a form of novel in which the story was liberally compounded with sketches and touchings of the different grades of life about us. Whether this was a strictly artistic process, it would take long to discuss; but it can be shown that it was his favourite method, and remained so to the last days of his life. He was unexcelled in presenting a fanciful picture of little scenes of daily life, such as he might encounter in his walks. He pierced below the surface; he saw quaint oddities that would have escaped others, and presented them under lively and humorous conditions.

The extraordinary influence of Dickens is specially felt when we think of our intimate and personal acquaintance with his characters and their sayings and doings; how we know them like living persons; how constantly we are taking up his novels for a talk, as it were, with the figures whom we know so well. Contrast with this state of things our knowledge of the novels by George Eliot, Reade, Wilkie

Collins, Lord Lytton, and many more. It is quite a different feeling. Their characters and stories seem quite shadowy compared with his; they are written things, not real figures.

To Dickens was certainly owing the introduction of the publication in 'numbers'—a very curious and interesting development in literature. I doubt if this form of publication has been attempted in any other country. It probably arose out of the notion of issuing *illustrations* periodically, which were to be accompanied by an explanatory text, the model being Dr. Syntax's tour, or possibly some of Pierce Egan's pictures of London life. This form may have engendered Dickens's peculiar style and treatment of his subjects. No ordinary story—say one of Miss Austen's—could bear being issued in this fashion, for there would be many portions altogether without interest or excitement, though leading up artistically to the proper moment of dramatic action.

On the other hand, an author who writes his story, say, in twenty 'monthly instalments,' is compelled to put something exciting into each

instalment, and this must be done, *coûte que coûte*, or the interest will flag. The result is therefore some twenty episodes, each detached, but strung to its neighbours, and not one homogeneous whole. And see the penalty that has to be paid! If there be gain in securing the monthly attention of the periodical reader, this attention in its turn flags when the whole becomes a single complete work. The reader finds the interest fail suddenly at twenty distinct points, and he is tempted to suspend his reading at these twenty points, as though the matter had been partially concluded. The very form of the bulky volume when the numbers are bound together betrays this arrangement, and it is even inclined to open of itself at the close of each number.*

* The example thus set was too effective and profitable not to be imitated. In a year or two after the appearance of 'Pickwick,' the brilliant and rollicking Lever sent out his 'Harry Lorrequer,' assuming as his regular livery a pink wrapper, and also availing himself of Dickens's illustrator, Hablot Browne. By-and-by came Thackeray with his yellow covers and his own etchings. These writers had to submit themselves to the laws of the system, to supply some sort of monthly adventure, with a certain droll or effective exhibition of character, together with sparkling sayings and commentaries, that would be quoted or linger in the memory, so that the

But Dickens might be considered almost the inventor of a specially charming form of writing, which he dealt with in a singularly delicate and fanciful style, usually a description of some scene or locality from his own point of view, giving, as it were, its 'note,' with the feelings or impressions it excited, half humorous, half sentimental. These were really perfect and entire chrysolites; they lingered in the memory, and recalled the

reader should be sure of a good and amusing 'shilling's-worth.' It may be said that before Dickens ceased working, it had been discovered that this instalment form had ceased to attract. First, the two illustrations had lost their power, for the reason that they had become conventional, and did not help the story. This will be seen at once when we recall the extraordinary vitality of the early illustrations of Dickens's works, 'Pickwick,' 'Nicholas Nickleby,' 'Oliver Twist,' and 'The Old Curiosity Shop,' which seem inspired by the story and—even apart from the story—rouse attention and curiosity from their dramatic force. It was the same with 'Vanity Fair,' whose Becky Sharpe and her friends, though somewhat clumsily sketched, have a strangely living interest. It was so even with the illustrations to 'Lorrequer' and 'Charles O'Malley,' which are boisterously diverting, and tell their own story clearly. But in the later works of all three writers the plates are in themselves unmeaning, and filled with mere lay figures, grouped together and depending for significance on the explanatory descriptions below. The reader gained nothing by looking at them, and remained uninterested. Without the charm of the illustrations the serial lost fully half its interest.

place under the most pleasing conditions and associations, glorifying it, as it were. The writer made it affect us exactly as it affected himself. Indeed, he was 'at his best,' and wrote in his most natural, fanciful style, wherever his own feelings and enjoyment of the life about him filled him. In the earlier numbers we thus had, of this pattern, 'Our English Watering-place,' 'Our French Watering-place,' 'A Flight,' and other pieces of the kind. Years later, when starting *All the Year Round*, he developed the idea in more formal shape as a series, entitled: 'The Uncommercial Traveller,' a charming record of his little wanderings and observations on what he saw. The 'English watering-place' was his favourite Broadstairs, that quaint and old-fashioned little port. It was described with extraordinary effect; its flavour and 'note' were conveyed with an effect that brings the place before the reader in the most telling and picturesque fashion. The humour of it, too, is delightful. The old 'salts' that lounge about the queer, crazy pier and little streets, and their ways and humours, are delightfully touched. The French watering-place was Boulogne, and his account of the château where he lived, and of Beaucourt, his landlord, disguised

as M. Loyal, is charmingly sketched. Everyone loves the gallant, ever courteous Beaucourt.*

The interest of these papers is found in their furnishing glimpses, and delightful ones, too, of the author's private life and feelings. 'The Flight' is a vivid account of the journey from London to Paris, then somewhat a novelty, and before 'club trains' were thought of. It is done with extraordinary brilliancy and effect, and he unfolds the actual feeling of being whirled along through the different countries and districts.† Most picturesque, too, were the changes of scene, the tranquilly monotonous French country, succeeded by a fortified town, it might be, with distant drumming of soldiers.

We seem to have made the journey with him.

* On a late visit to Boulogne I found that the château, which was outside the old town, near the Calais road, had been swept away, and its place taken by a convent. In the grounds, however, was to be seen the little pavilion or *dépendance*, where Dickens used sometimes to quarter his English friends when they visited him.

† Dickens was often very happy in his lively images of the incidents or machinery of railway travelling. As in Mugby Junction, when he likened the labours of the signalmen to 'the drawing with difficulty much beer,' and somewhere else, the arms of the tall signal-posts to razors 'shaving the air.' This sort of imagery was then welcomed with delight.

He attempted to give even the sense of flying through a station, 'Bang—bang—another station' and presented a curious succession of scenes—hedges, fields, flying by, the low-lying sand-toned French country, the women standing by the crossings, the weary feeling at the close, as you rolled into Paris, the long day having at last gone by.*

This fanciful style, it must be said, has wholly passed away, and would certainly not 'go down' now. It may be that there is no master-hand to strike the chords, but I fancy the taste itself for such things has gone. If we were now describing a railway-station, it would be thought trifling to talk of 'razors shaving the air.' It would be somehow felt to be out of place. Further, the matter-of-fact tone of the time would be apt to question the *truthfulness* of such statements. Thus, where the author describes a little lighthouse on Broadstairs pier with its red lamp, he said it so suggested an apothecary's red jar illuminated from behind, that

* It is much the same in the case of a favourite actor, whose 'ways' and devices audiences know by heart, and supply from instinct even when they are not present. Strangers, who are not thus trained to him, will hardly understand.

belated husbands whose wives were in a critical way were known to go walking round and round t '*looking for the night-bell.*' Droll as this is, it is felt at once that this stroke is due entirely to the imagination of the author, that it was a bit of far-fetched exaggeration which could not have occurred.

To the last he was partial to this form of writing, and as he began his course with papers of this kind, 'magazine articles,' such as were most of the 'Sketches by Boz,' so he finished with 'The Uncommercial Traveller.'

One result of his extraordinary influence was —he seemed, indeed, a sort of literary Gladstone —that all his followers and 'merry men' felt bound to copy—mimic, perhaps—all his forms and 'turns' and blemishes, I am afraid with the result of wearying and disgusting the readers. It is difficult now to understand the tricks that were played in this strained and exaggerated sham 'Dickensese.'

There was a regular formula — a delightfully Procrustean process — for treating every subject. The most effective style was—or was thought to be — that of associating grotesque images with lofty, dignified subjects. This

was done by regular recipe. The way was to discard the proper name of the person or thing under treatment at the beginning, and substitute a sort of comic or impudent sobriquet, to be steadily used throughout. By extending the principle, the oddest circumlocutions were used for common and familiar phrases, and this was held to be a legitimate form of humour. If a foreign dialect was introduced, it was almost an invariable custom to translate it literally, after the fashion of Rigaud in 'Little Dorrit.' Indeed, foreigners in general were bound to be treated in a farcical spirit; and in any travelling adventure it was considered only fair to place the country and its inhabitants in as ridiculous a light as possible. This was not due to the imagination, but solely to the spirit of the vivacious reporter, who went abroad with the set purpose to see only absurdities, and to chronicle only what was likely to suit his special style. This combination of travel and literature was a very agreeable feature of the enterprise.

In my own humble fashion I did a vast amount of this kind of peregrination, bringing home little information of any kind—there was no time for that; but 'photographing,' as it was called, and

'word-painting' with a well-charged brush. All that was desired was to know how people and things 'looked,' and it was required, as I have said, that they should look as comic as possible. In this spirit I recollect visiting Holland, and on my return prepared for the courteous reader a long series of 'word-pictures,' in which the worthy Hollanders could scarcely have recognised themselves.

The grand point, 'half the battle,' as it is called, was to have a good stirring title, that should in itself contain some species of joke. 'Down among the Dutchmen' was considered happy: it suggested a gay, even rollicking, traveller going about among the comic natives. Of course, there was no going 'down' to them, as was the case with the 'dead men,' but the allusion would touch a musical note.

In this spirit of humorous exaggeration the work was carried on, great 'fun' being made of even the Dutch language; even the *spoorweg*, as the railway was called, and properly called in the language of the country, was a subject for pleasant ridicule or chaff. The well-known Oude Doölen Hotel supplied jests of an Irish sort—allusions to Larry Doolins, etc. The per-

sonal appearance and peculiarities of Dutchmen and Dutchwomen were all 'touched off' in the same vein.

Later I went to Rome, and filled a volume—indeed, would have filled many—with airy commentaries on everything. General Goyon was at that time commanding the French troops—no doubt, a worthy and efficient officer; but from some peculiarity in his bearing and fashion of decorating himself, he was at once selected to be 'word-painted,' was christened 'Goyon the Magnificent,' a phrase henceforth invariably used in all allusions to him, which were very frequent.

I recollect these and other salient sketches used to be regularly copied into the *Times*, where the intimates of 'Goyon the Magnificent' must have rubbed their eyes as they found a character, ways, and manners constructed for him, and a general ludicrous air imparted to all he did, by an utter stranger, who was watching from about a hundred yards away.

All this I recall here to show what was the style in fashion not so many years ago—which style certainly would not be accepted now. The public have grown tired of these *macaroons*, as they may be called, and are fed

on something more solid. 'Word-painting' has gone out, and, like Marley, is as dead as a door-nail. Facts are in demand.

Popular taste seems to require changes in *style*, which often succeed each other at intervals, as one prevailing mode is exhausted in attraction and the public tires of it. Dickens and his affectionately optimist view of human nature and of things in general not unnaturally brought reaction in the shape of a writer of Thackeray's type, with his amusingly cynical views. 'Currer Bell' then made the attempt to impart interest to mental operations instead of things, and her system was assuredly founded on Balzac's methods. This was also carried on by George Eliot in 'Adam Bede' and other works, in which the story was studiously simple, if not tame, the real story being found in the development of strong passions and emotions. Anthony Trollope's system was to describe the incidents of ordinary domestic life, and to deal with the familiar characters of society in a pleasant, unpretending fashion. Everything was natural, and 'understanded of' everybody, who, without effort, recognised all his types and topics from their own experience. He did not go deep, but dealt

with such peculiarities and phenomena as were on the surface.

This system also not unnaturally led to another reaction, and many will still remember the sensation produced by the writer styling himself 'Guy Livingstone,' who introduced the strong man of fiction. He tried to make heroes of athletic fellows, who were as brutal in their manners as in their minds, and who treated their worshipping women in a coarse rough style, which only excited further admiration. Miss Rhoda Broughton later took up the same theme with far more power and tragic force, though she still idealized and seemed to idolize the 'strong man' of fiction. The public soon tired of athletic lovers, and found a sudden delight in the insipid adventures of the 'Heir of Redclyffe.' Next Miss Braddon 'came along' with wicked Lady Audleys and their wells, creating a perfect rage for 'sensation.' After her the evergreen Mrs. Henry Wood, whose stories are still read with eagerness, though the pen has long since dropped from her fingers. That stirring tale, 'East Lynne,' is still purchased every day at the railway bookstalls, and is still read by thousands. Nor is this wonderful. I have seen a rude

dramatic version of it draw sobs and tears from a crowded audience. Mrs. Wood was an eminently satisfactory writer. You feel as you read that you are in safe hands, and that there will be no inequalities. The public does not really care for spasmodic work. But to enumerate all these capricious changes of public taste would be an endless task.

The average circulating-library novels of the earlier days, it seems to me, were more brilliant things than what are furnished now. There was an attempt at 'sparkle,' or 'rattle,' which was often successful enough. Characters and manners of the day were treated of with smartness; even epigram was aimed at. In the novel of our day, it seems to me that the writer himself wants to talk and to be heard; the older writer wanted to make his characters talk. Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Trollope, and, later, Mrs. Marsh (authoress of the ever-charming 'Emilia Wyndham'), and Mrs. Maberley, were the chief purveyors. Whatever the faults of these productions, no one could deny that they were amusing. How full of fun the 'Widow Barnaby'! and the 'Widow Married'— how many a hearty laugh was to be had from its boisterous situations! The fun was always fast

and furious. Theodore Hook, with his 'Gilbert Gurney' and 'Gurney Married,' added to the general hilarity. Even now these works can be read with enjoyment, making due allowance for the staleness of the topics, which since have been treated *ad nauseam*.

Mrs. Gore presented pictures and characters drawn from society, of which she had some experience, lords and ladies of quality moving gracefully through her pages. Though Anthony Trollope, Mrs. Trollope's son, gave scenes from society, like his mother, he affected a much more subdued vein of humour. The others were more in the Pickwickian vein. One brilliant performance which made a great impression was 'Cecil: a Coxcomb'—suggested, I suppose, by 'Pelham,' and followed by 'Cecil: a Peer,' for it was *de rigueur* to supply a sequel to any successful work. But I distinctly recall this clever novel, and its leading epigrams. The public at this time liked to have good 'quotable' things. There is no opening now for a story written on this principle. Books, too, in which the characters were drawn from real life were in high fashion, and, as in the case of 'Vivian Grey,' MS. 'keys' were circulated.

Recently looking over some of these things, I was astonished at the lively brilliance with which even some of the third and fourth-rate authors could write. There was one John Fisher Murray,* who did much hack-work for the booksellers, and who wrote a three-volume novel, entitled 'The Viceroy,' supposed to be a picture of Dublin society, the characters drawn from real life. This could be read now with pleasure, the fun, and even wit, being noticeable. One of the figures was oddly named 'Sir Humbug Drivequick,' who represented a well-known medico of the capital, supposed to have won his reputation, or, at least, to have attracted general attention, by always driving at full speed from patient to patient. He sat in an elegant victoria drawn by a matchless

* This Fisher Murray was the son of a Dublin physician, Sir James Murray, who was clever enough to invent and make a fortune out of a certain contribution to the Pharmacopeia. Who does not, or did not, know 'Murray's Fluid Magnesia'? This physician may or may not have been a wit, but in his death was certainly the occasion of a jest, which I have always thought one of the most brilliant of its class. It was purposed to erect a monument to his memory in the public cemetery, and the inscription came under discussion, when a cheerful member of the college suggested the one on Wren, in St. Paul's: 'Si monumentum quæris circumspice.'

pair of steeds. The method might be found not a bad one in these days of bold advertisement. But 'Sir Humbug Drivequick'! We cannot conceive of such a name being used in novel-writing in our day.

It would be interesting to inquire what is the public taste at this moment. The three-volume novel has surely gone by—I fancy because every story has been told again and again. Mere story-telling becomes dull work. From practice and familiarity you can anticipate everything. I believe that there is a great 'opening,' as it is called, in two distinct directions. We might go back to the novel of character—that is, make the whole narrative turn on the development of passion and humour, which seems to have been Scott's and Dickens' method. The other direction is the revival of the broadly and boisterously humorous novel, on the pattern of 'Harry Lorrequer' or 'Pickwick.' I do not, of course, say those spirited chronicles can be reproduced, but the pleasantly boisterous and amusing spirit might be imitated.

The amount of writing done nowadays is certainly extraordinary. The spectacle of one of the great bookstalls at an important station, such as

Victoria, is amazing. Every day new magazines, new pamphlets, new shilling 'dreadfuls,' crowd the counter, bewildering the eye. The ingenuity of the vendors is taxed to the utmost to find accommodation. In this disorderly crowd of candidates there is little chance of attracting attention, so every ridiculous trick in the way of title, of cover, and of subject is used to decoy the purchaser, and arouse a curiosity destined only to be disappointed.

Nothing strikes me with more surprise, and I must say despondency, than the general dearth of humour that is found in our time—I should perhaps say, the dearth of an appreciation of true humour. It is amazing sometimes to see the things that are quoted—inviting applause—as 'capital stories,' 'good things,' 'happy retorts,' and the like. Sometimes a clever man will make a jest-book, collecting the 'choicest things' that have been said by 'witty' men. Some of these can be read through without exciting a single smile. This can be assuredly traced to the system of ear-pleasantries which prevails, to the bald comfort of seeing a 'joke' in two words of different meanings, though having the same sound. It is also due to the introduction of the 'American

humour,' the basis of which is some far-fetched extravagant expression, which startles. We have the humour of the Word, but the humour of the Thing has gone out. There is no such thing as a humorous book—that is, a book from end to end based on some diverting perversion, such, for instance, as Poole's 'Little Pedlington,' where a man, disgusted with the venality and deceptiveness of the Metropolis, hies him to a rural town, in the hope of finding innocence and simplicity, and is dumfounded at meeting all the Metropolitan vices, only more virulent, because more concentrated. How diverting were the humours of Theodore Hook, the obstreperous adventures of 'Harry Lorrequer,' which were really no more than Irish local stories and jests, expanded and developed.

Many of the scenes and touches in 'Gilbert Gurney' even now make one smile as we read them; such as the hearty welcome given by the poor parson and his family of daughters to the newly-arrived garrison officer, who, overwhelmed with his kindly, almost paternal, reception, says on going away, 'When Mrs. —— arrives, you must let me bring her to see you.' The consternation and disappointment that succeeded

defied all social checks, and was openly shown. Books, as I say, are now not written on such diverting principles.

Everyone must feel a deep respect for the Scotch, for their abilities, their unfailing power of success, and their admirable workmanship in every line. They 'hold the field' in a most remarkable way. But they seem to lack the appreciation of humour. A mere allusion to a Scotch usage with them seems to be considered a capital joke. The quoting a proverb even, such as 'Mun gae to Cupar,' will cause the heartiest of chuckles.*

* Not long since I read an account of a speech by the much admired Mr. R. L. Stevenson, which was largely copied as a diverting specimen of humour:

'In the first place I am a Scotsman—(cheers)—but upon that I will not dwell. (Cheers and laughter.) In the second place, I am an old and, I hope I may be allowed to say, a very good Presbyterian, the proof of which, I may say, is that *I have sat out a sermon of an hour and thirty minutes.* (Laughter.) It was delivered in the parish church of Leith, and *by a remarkable coincidence* the parish church is still standing in support of my statement. (Laughter.) My grandfather was minister of a parish close to Edinburgh. He was a nice old gentleman. (Laughter.) I remember *a jest* of my father's, who desired there should be laid before the assembly on one occasion a report as to how many parishes (if any) John Smith had not assisted in the Sacrament. (Laughter.) If there was no Sacrament he would visit the manse, and

The favourite imputation of the 'surgical operation' is, perhaps, a libel, but there is still the 'literalness' of which Elia complained, and specimens of which I have often encountered. In some reminiscences I once described how, when a boy, I had gone on the ice of a little garden fish-pond before the ice would well bear, and had to struggle out by breaking a passage through it to the shore. Hurrying home to change, I met someone whose sympathy I invited by detailing my piteous adventure. He only said, with manifest disappointment, 'What! so the ice is all spoiled!' This incident was trivial enough, but it had a touch of character. A Scotch friend wrote to me on it: 'As to that cynic who met you (*he* was going to do likewise), one can only say that he was a being without a particle of sympathy or of *camaraderie*

always for certain he would visit the churchyard. He was very tall, very lean, but, here comes a difference, very good-looking. (Laughter and cheers.)' But conclusive proof of this lack of humour is furnished by the dedication in a recent work on ghosts written by a well-known *littérateur* of admitted brilliancy and genius. 'Dear ——,' he writes '*spirits* much more rare and valuable than those spoken of in this book are yours. Whatever "mediums" may be able to do, you can transfer *High Spirits* to your readers.' I leave this to speak for itself.

in his nature. All he wanted was his own enjoyment, and his exclamation, "So then the ice is all spoiled!" might well betoken his character, which is indeed "the countenance of the soul."' This was depressing to read.*

In our own day how meagre is the list of

* In this connection it may be added that one of the most extraordinary phenomena for admirers of genuine humour is the reputation enjoyed by that eminent and brilliant Scot, Lord Rosebery, as a humorist and even witty speaker. On a speech of his on the Home Rule Bill in the House of Lords, the press exhausted itself in praise of his wit and 'sparkling epigrams.' As we read, we might exclaim with Johnson: 'Where's the merriment?' Here are the jests that produced this enjoyment. The Bill was 'not in the dissecting-room, but in the chamber of death.' 'You are not legislating for to-day or to-morrow,' someone said. To which the retort, 'Yes, we are legislating for this day six months.' Lord Salisbury had his legions, on which is quoted Sidney Smith's recipe, 'Let onioned atoms lurk within the bowl.' The Tories thought the Radicals everything that was wicked. They had the 'lues Gladstonia,' and the 'morbus Spenceranus.' The lines were then quoted, 'Who makes the quartern loaf and Luddites rise,' used in innumerable political speeches. Then their treatment of the Bill was likened to a bull-fight, Lord Salisbury being matador. It was also like the dressing of a pike, which we are told to stuff with every rich delicacy and then throw out of the window, a stale 'common form,' used also of the cucumber. One lord said he knew all about Ireland: 'What does Ireland know about him?' This the *Daily News* called 'scathing satire.' What 'witticisms' are here it would be difficult to say.

humorous writers! It would almost seem that there is but little taste for this sort of production, that is, for a long, sustained story, founded on oddities of character and adventure. Yet a generation or two ago the public was richly provided for in this way by Dickens, Thackeray, Hook, Lever, Albert Smith, Poole, and others. We have, indeed, some comic writers, but their efforts are on a small scale. The lively and exuberant Burnand, 'F. C. B.,' has a surprising fertility in furnishing pleasantries of a very superior kind, and his 'Happy Thoughts,' in spite of its fragmentary construction, must ever hold the highest place as a specimen of original humour and study of character. No one hitherto has so successfully analyzed those little foolish meditations and self-communings which even the wisest indulge in, those musings which our vanity takes care not to recognise. Few can read the chapters of 'Happy Thoughts' without an uneasy or humiliating suspicion that something of the sort, or something akin, must at one time or another have passed through their own minds. Witness the delightful incident of 'practising repartee' on a railway porter. What true comedy, too, in the episode of the heir who hesitated to introduce a

too free-and-easy friend to the prim 'starched' aunt, whose sense of propriety would be outraged, the result being that the intruder became not only acceptable to the lady, but popular, he himself becoming a 'poorish' sort of creature in her eyes. This is an admirable touch, and as true as it is admirable. Excellent, too, are his parodies of popular novels,—'Mokanna' and the others.

'F. C. B.' has the 'knack' of making every sentence sparkle and crackle with quips and puns of the amusing sort, and these are of such an easy, impromptu kind, and so naturally introduced, that there is nothing forced or laborious in the process. No better specimen could be given of his special humour than the picture of the 'flunkey' overtaken by a bull, and which is underwritten 'Goring Thomas,' the composer.

Thousands of these jests have dropped from his ever-facile pen. I have been seated opposite 'F. C. B.' at the Garrick Club, when he has come up to town for one of his *Punch* Wednesdays, and when he would be jotting down some of these unconsidered trifles, undisturbed by the chatter about him. As a smile came on his face, and a

twinkle into his merry eye, he would go over to one of the groups, to exhibit what he had done, and amuse them with the little jest of the moment, and to be received with general hilarity.

His assistant and sub-editor for many years, Mr. Arthur à Becket, my friend and neighbour, has an agreeable wit of his own. No better instance of the versatile, hard-working 'literary man' could be found. He is novelist, reviewer, play-writer, 'joker,' editor of a Sunday newspaper, to which he supplies reminiscences of his own busy life, to say nothing of the Parliamentary experiences of that facetious observer, 'the Member for Wrottenborough.' Few people think how much social toil is thrown upon a general writer of this kind, for to write he must see and observe. Perpetual dinner-parties, not to be resisted, though they entail serious physical 'wear and tear,' attendance at the innumerable 'shows' and functions—these are a necessary portion of the duties of the *recherché* worker.

Another well-established humorist is Mr. Anstey, or Guthrie, whose acute satirical sketches of middle-class life are welcomed by all *Punch*

readers. Who does not recall the sensation and genial enjoyment produced by his most original of stories, 'Vice Versâ,' the distinctive note whereof was the probable treatment of the supernatural element, so gravely and adroitly introduced as almost to carry conviction? A more entertaining narrative has not appeared for many a day. Later attempts in the same *genre* were not so successful. His smaller stories, such as 'The Black Poodle,' were pleasing and exquisitely finished. His latest successes were those singularly happy parodies of the Ibsen plays, one of which, 'The Pill-doctor,' it was truly said, might have been written by the 'master' himself. In fact, had he accepted the grotesque situations as serious, it was exactly what he would have written.

A third humorist of mark—which seems to exhaust the list—is the quaint and brilliant Jerome K. Jerome.* It is curious, however, that his humour should be altogether American, its foundation being an irony flavoured with extra-

* There is a sort of American significance in this name, particularly in the introduction of the 'K,' but this popular writer is of English birth.

vagance, and carried as far as it can possibly go.

Many years since there was an obscure dramatic journal started, which was short-lived enough; and I recall being much struck with a little essay, describing in the most humorous way the devices of the conventional stage heroine. I remember reading it aloud at home with much admiration. Later it appeared in the now well-known collection, 'Stage-land,' which may be considered one of the most diverting pieces of satire of our time. All the conventional types are treated with sympathetic gravity and assumed respect. It has been said that this vein of burlesque has been anticipated in Gilbert à Becket's 'Quizziology of the British Drama,' but the resemblance goes scarcely beyond the subject. His later works, 'Two Men in a Boat,' etc., though even more successful, do not seem to me to have equal merit. His magazine, *The Idler*, is an attempt to impart this ironical strain into periodical literature, and to furnish a monthly supply of what has been called 'the new humour.' The editor has formed a sort of school of young 'free-and-easy' writers, such as Barr, Zangwill, and

others, who have learned or practised their special style in that odd little society, 'The Playgoers' Club.' It is curious, by the way, to note the growth, in writing even, of the 'free-lance' system, as it may be called, owing, as it seems, to the craze for what is novel and startling. But all these unlicensed displays, though for the moment received with curiosity and enjoyment, are but short-lived. As Johnson said of Sterne, 'Nothing odd lasts,' and after the first surprise the jaded eye turns away. The phrases and jests of this new style are really akin to the sort of 'chaff' we hear in the streets—'rough-and-ready,' disrespectful utterances, which are beneath the dignity of print. In common conversation there are a vast number of irresponsible things said which are not worthy of being recorded, though they may serve an ephemeral purpose.

In spite of the various 'royal roads' now open to literary success, there is still the drawback of precariousness, and the uncertainty of your hold. It is not so much that the public is capricious as that it lends no more attention than the surprise or novelty requires. How absurd now seems the sensation produced by some trivial thing of the hour, about which everyone seemed to go 'horn-

mad!' As we look back, or take up some of these trivialities, we rub our eyes and wonder at such excitement. Someone once wrote a little tract in which the various nations were described as troublesome schoolboys, their talk and behaviour generally being set forth according to the characteristics of each nation. This was a trite notion enough, but to the astonishment, perhaps, of the author himself, it 'caught on' in the most extravagant way. Everyone was asking, 'Have you read "Dame Europa's School"?' Hundreds of thousands were sold; it was translated into foreign tongues; there is actually a bibliography of the little pamphlet. The author was named and pointed out with eager curiosity and admiration. I think he tried a second 'skit' of the kind—a something 'By the author of "Dame Europa's School"'—but it did not succeed. It would almost seem in the case of such things that the success depends entirely on the rage; for the subject, or treatment, does not matter.

We also recall the 'Ride to Khiva,' a free-and-easy, jocular account of travel, which was read *con furia* by those who cared neither for the author, nor for Khiva, nor whether he rode, walked, or drove. This, again, we re-read with surprise.

A case, however, almost disastrous in its results was that of a little jocular story entitled 'Ginx's Baby,' which had the most wonderful success. Anything concerning babies, it would seem, is a 'sure card,' 'Bootles' Baby' and 'Helen's Babies' having 'scored heavily.' The clown in the pantomime knows this well, and regularly introduces a baby. The author of 'Ginx,' a clever man, was the lion of the hour, or of the moment; nothing was so much read, talked of, and bought. The author actually obtained a seat in Parliament, possibly on the strength of his Baby. Nay, more, he became agent to one of the colonies—a lucrative post—perhaps on the strength of the Baby. In a short time, however, he lost all these good things. He tried to set up a new Baby—he wrote novels; but nothing would do. The public cared no longer for 'Ginx,' nor for the author of 'Ginx.' This unhappy book was really the cause of misfortune, and its brief spell of popularity seemed to have been itself a misfortune.

Allowing all weight to the tremendous power of advertisement, and of the fashionable humour of the moment, which lift some trivial work or writer into popularity, it seems to me that the

public always passes a very sound and correct judgment on the merits of an author. It will be found when some trifle such as 'Dame Europa,' before alluded to, or something more important, like Mr. Rider Haggard's Eastern stories, are in vogue, that there are some unfamiliar, or even original, points, which interest or attract, and reasonably attract. The influence of neighbours and friends chattering over such books, quoting and describing their incidents, lends a sort of glamour. They are more or less, too, *à propos;* our thoughts are otherwise full of the subject, which the new element feeds and harmonizes with.

'Dame Europa' was an odd and quaint idea; though trivial enough, it suited a trivial moment. So it was with 'John Inglesant,' which was read in an atmosphere of praise and general recommendation. The lover, on the same principle, sees all manner of charms and graces in the little verses of his mistress. The public relishes these ephemeral things as *hors d'œuvres*, just sufficient for the moment, but to be presently discarded. That the general judgment of the public is sound enough is shown by the fact that no self-advertising efforts, no constant recurrence of an inferior writer's name here, there, and everywhere, will

cause him to be accepted or to be 'taken seriously,' as it is called.

Decay and change seem to attend literary men, actors, and artists in general. We all recall the enthusiasm there was for the novels of William Black. His name was in everyone's mouth; nothing was read but his works. He has now 'gone out,' passed by. It was so with Mr. Hardy, though he has lately made a valiant rally. What could exceed the 'rage' there was for Mr. Rider Haggard's writings? but this has long since subsided. Wilkie Collins with his 'Woman in White,' 'Dead Secret,' 'Armadale,' and the rest, for a number of years 'held the field,' but his attraction gradually palled, and was finally extinguished. Mr. Shorthouse had a similar but briefer spell of popularity. This seems to support the theory I have always held, that the public has a fixed measure of attention to give, than which it cannot give more. What is given to a new candidate must be taken from an old one. He must share with his competitor.

There is something almost pathetic in this decay of reputation. But you cannot, as the saying goes, 'have your cake and eat it'; you must take your success in 'a lump sum

down,' and have done with it, or in petty instalments. The grand moral, which is too often forgotten, is to find out, not what suits yourself, but what suits your public, and, above all, to keep yourself well before the public, so that they shall not forget you, or be distracted by new favourites, here following the advice of Shakespeare, in what seems to me the noblest passage he has written :

'Perséverance . . .
Keeps honour bright : to have done, is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way ;
For honour travels in a strait so narrow,
Where but one goes abreast : keep then the path ;
For emulation hath a thousand sons,
That one by one pursue : if you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
Like to an enter'd tide they all rush by,
And leave you hindmost ;
Or, like a gallant horse fallen in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O'errun and trampled on : then what they do in present,
Though less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours :
For time is like a fashionable host,
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand ;
And with his arms outstretch'd, as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer : Welcome ever smiles,
And Farewell goes out sighing. O ! let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was ;
For beauty, wit,

High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating time.
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,
That all, with one consent, praise new-born gawds
Though they are made and moulded of things past;
And give to dust, that is a little gilt,
More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.
The present eye praises the present object.*

* 'Troilus and Cressida,' Act III., Ulys. *loq.*

CHAPTER III.

THE AMATEURS—'GETTING INTO PRINT.'

Though familiarity and curiosity combined have helped to breed contempt for most things once held sacred, there still remain two mysteries to which the eye of the public wanders with an awe and wistfulness undiminished. There are two classes which address audiences—the one seen, the other unseen; the Players in short, and the Writers. The same undefined curiosity attends both; indeed, a stage and a printing-office by daylight are strangely alike. Both offer the same sort of grimy, dark, unwholesome-looking stage-door. As a matter of personal confession, I must own that even the familiarity of many years has not enabled me to get free of the strange charm and sort of reverential awe inspired by these two institutions. Printing-office and stage affect me in the same way. I still

find myself regarding with dim respect the flitting figures in aprons; while the sallow-faced player, in his shabby-genteel garments, arouses the same feeling. 'We sell power here,' said Boulton, the engineer, to Dr. Johnson; and the actors, so earthy and commonplace in their every-day guise, will by-and-by be glorified into heroes and heroines, a thousand pairs of eyes and as many souls absorbed in their movements. Suffused in the golden light of the stage, arrayed in rich garments, they seem to belong to an order a little above nature. Their earthiness has passed away.

The same fascination attends writing, and all the incidents connected with it. It is not too much to say that everyone with any taste for reading is eager to write, and longs to see himself in print. There is something very flattering to pride and self-complacency in the compliment—for such it is—of money being paid by a fellow-creature to read what *you* have written! Mere print without this solace is barren work; and the sensible, however eager to find themselves 'in print,' do not consider that the end is fairly gained when the performance is at their *own* expense. It must be confessed that there

is a sort of delight connected with writing, print, proofs, etc., which I find from my own experience never flags. Comparing it with ordinary pleasures, I should say there is no entertainment like that of writing a book, where all is going on smoothly. I have lived all my life among 'proofs,' and have always welcomed them with never-failing interest. There is an *original* feeling, as the eye fondly glances at the newly-set page just arrived.

As Elia has it, 'All things look *raw* in MS.' Nothing can be considered really created until 'put in print.' It is like the casting in bronze of the clay model. No matter how clear and finished the calligraphy, there is this precarious or alterable look. There is a facsimile of the 'Christmas Carol' issued—the actual reproduction of the original MS.—but it is impossible to look at it with comfort. The feeling, too, of being able to give a fixed, rigid shape to your own floating thoughts, instead of letting them evaporate and pass away, is a mysterious one.

All the world now writes, or wants to write, or to be helped to write. The curate, the young lady, the elderly spinster, the intrepid widow, the officer who sings and plays, the pleasing 'bachelor

of position,' the sisters ('two cherries on one stalk'), the clever youth, the father of a family with lady sympathizers—all are among the chief candidates who have added a fresh torment to the precarious incidents of the publisher's life. Yet it is one of the most perfect records of failure known. Publishers will tell you that every day brings its load of these ill-omened packets. In well-ordered houses there is a register carefully kept of the day of arrival, receipt acknowledged, sentences of reader, and due return. This is necessary in the case of so captious, petulant, and sensitive a tribe as our candidate writers. This business-like proceeding, however, only inflames them. They would prefer irregular sentiment.

There is one clumsy common-form often resorted to, and thought to be infallible for 'getting into print.' One day it flashes on a candidate that he knows Scriblerus, the writing-man. Instantly the clouds break; he sees, as in a glass clearly, the certain publication of his MS. It is sent off to Scriblerus, who is specially charged to see the publisher: or to write a 'strong letter,' when the thing will be 'at once attended to.' Scriblerus, himself successful, must be the

cause of success in others. Or it may be that a warm-hearted friend has said, 'Here, give me your novel—I'll take it myself and get Scriblerus to read it.' He will report later that nothing could be more cordial and good-natured than Scriblerus's reception. Nay, he had even read a portion, and remarked, 'Ha! this looks promising! something in a new line, hey?' He *will* write to the publisher the 'strong letter,' though, of course, he cannot guarantee anything; it must stand or fall by its merits. 'There is no royal road,' etc., he will say. All agree, of course; for what we want is merely to have it read and fairly judged on its merits.

Now, these simple persons do not know that this is a regular department of Scriblerus's work. That *rusé* person has long since contrived a system for his own protection, much as members of Parliament deal with constituents pressing for places. So soon as the intermediary has departed, he will sit down and write to his publisher somewhat as follows:

'My dear Sir,

'I am obliged, under pressure of a friend, to forward you the enclosed MS., which seems

to have some merit. But I know the claims upon your time, and do hope you will excuse my trespassing on you. You will, of course, deal with it as you think fit,' etc.

This is 'the strong letter.' The publisher understands this perfectly; may even make an exception to his usual practice, in compliment to his friend, by returning the piece very promptly, with a less than usually curt form of rejection.

I once received a bulky MS., patronized by a kindly friend, who introduced its author. He had written it, said the friend, at school, at Marlborough College, when only a little over seventeen. And it was 'finished hurriedly within the last few days,' as he was anxious—so he seemed to convey—not to keep the public waiting. He had other things by him of a different *genre*, which would be forwarded when ready, in case the present specimen did not suit.

A more artful way of approaching Scriblerus is to ask him whether he will *just* read Miss ——'s production, 'and give the poor girl his advice.' A really nice girl, and rather clever. How reasonable and Good Samaritan-like! But Scriblerus knows well that no one cares a straw

for his 'advice' or 'criticism,' even if he take the trouble to write sheets of that article; what is really required is his assistance. So that wary fox is well on his guard, and will be 'only too delighted' to be of any use. He will carefully read and give his advice—such as it is—but, alas! must say in advance that he cannot undertake to do more; he is 'overwhelmed with work,' etc.

Sometimes, in the case of a blunt, coarse friend, it takes another shape, as once happened to myself:

'My dear ——,

'Mrs. S——, a charming woman, has shown me a little story that is full of talent. As she does not know you, I have promised her that I will ask you to get it into one of the magazines —mind, one of those that pay well—say the *Cornhill*. Now, my good friend, I rely on your exerting yourself in this matter, for I have promised Mrs. —— to do my best.

'Yours, etc.'

But the point was in the postscript: 'P.S.—I have not mentioned you to Mrs. S——, as I wish it to be *all* between you and me.'

Not long since a bulky bale of MS. was sent

with a *dégagé* note from a gentleman with whom I had spoken about once or twice. His letter was literally to this effect: 'Mr. —— particularly wishes that his story should be brought out. I should be glad if you would kindly undertake this for him.'

I have often wondered on what this free-and-easy claim to your services can be founded. There is nothing like it in the other walks of life. People do not write off with this supreme *gaieté de cœur*, and air of bestowing a favour, to ask for gratuitous medical or legal aid—not for themselves, but for a friend. They have, I suppose, a dim instinct that you are under obligations to the public, and *they* are of the public.

It is a situation of greater difficulty when some pleasing, tender creature, attractive and engaging, obtains a letter of introduction, and, forcing the *consigne*, slinks into your presence charged with the 'little story.' We know that little story—that MS. with the ribbon. What delicate pothooks and hangers, frail and nervous as herself! It is only 'her little magazine thing!'

The amazing skimble-skamble that is brought to you (taking it that you are Scriblerus)—the incoherent narrative, the extraordinary doings of

the characters, the wild story that meanders here, there, and everywhere—would seem incredible to anyone who had not had these attempts under his eye. And yet one cannot but sympathize with the enthusiasm, perfect good faith, and resolute labour which are expended. Who does not recall the sisters, modest amiable girls, whose wares a friend introduces—some vast novel, exquisitely copied on finest paper, bound, and mainly composed of conversations of enormous length? When this is pronounced hopelessly intractable, another is offered, and yet another, all 'got up' in the same painstaking fashion; it seems as if there was a whole library at home, the fair romancists commencing another regularly as soon as one is completed. Our amateurs are tremendous in conversations.

Yet another instance. One day I noticed an extra excitement, dancing eyes, expectancy, in a pleasant family where I was dining. Mamma opened the business — not without mystery; a great secret, but yet to be told. What did I think? *Only* think! Priscilla had been writing a story all this time. 'We've been reading it out, and it made us all cry! It must be published, we tell her; though, poor child! she

does not want *that*. So we at once said: "You will settle all that for her, and get her a little money too."' The shrinking Priscilla and her MS. were sent for, and I had to take it away; a word from me was to settle the matter with all and every the publishers. I really think the family expected an answer by the next day. I read the MS., for, having a sort of elderly *tendresse* for the young lady, I was anxious to help. But I found, alas! that of all the sad stuff I had ever been afflicted with this was the saddest. Well, I spent some weary hours shaping and curtailing it, writing it up, altering poor Priscilla's extraordinary sentences. 'I think,' I said with some complacency, 'I have improved it a little.' 'What! Then, you haven't settled it?' cried mamma. 'Oh, Priscilla will be so disappointed!'

When she came down, I showed her what I had done. 'I sat up till two this morning at it,' I added. 'Oh, what's this?' said the authoress pettishly. 'Why, you've spoiled the whole story. Good gracious me!' and she turned over the leaves. 'Mamma, he's cut it all up and quite spoiled it. Some of the best passages, too, that I took such pains with.' 'Really, I never heard of such a

thing!' says mamma, rather angry; 'the poor child's story to be treated in such a way! As if she didn't know how to write!'

I had to get it all 'put back' by a type-writer at my own costs and charges, but the family never forgave the insult. Next time I was coldly told: 'Oh, it's no matter; we gave it to Mr. ——, who was *so* pleased with it, and so kindly promised,' etc. But the artful Mr. —— did nothing with it either.

The hallucination which underlies all these frantic efforts, and which would be ludicrous if it did not excite pity, is that the fact of having written a novel with a pen on paper is the same thing as having constructed a story which can be read and admired. There is plenty of 'writing,' but there is also no 'novel.' Yet the deluded aspirant is aggrieved and disappointed. Was there not Charlotte Brontë, he (or she) reasons; who knew anything of her? She was a poor friendless country parson's daughter. Yet she was published, and what an instant success! So with the writer of 'Cometh up as a Flower,' and a dozen others. And why might not that which happened to Miss Brontë or Miss Broughton happen to Jones, or Miss Jones, or the Brown girls? Why

not? Well, it might, of course, and so might any unknown young painter in Hampstead or Chelsea have the best picture of the year, and any fourth-rate actor in a provincial theatre turn out an Irving or a Macready. These things happen occasionally, but too seldom to make it safe for a wise man or woman to reckon on them.

Say that the tarantula has bitten a father o' family, a worthy business-like person, and in business; he has written a novel which has been lent to a favoured few (females, of course), for his own sex openly decline it, and these amiable admirers encourage publication.

Some publishers, it may be said, give cordial reception to this class of candidate. It means business. One or two of the first tried may be 'full,' but he is sure to find one that is accommodating. He is determined to have something 'down,' the something being sure though moderate. As he fluently explains to his sympathizers, this is only good policy at first, as you are certain to get it back next time. The sanguine fellow, who confides every incident to his sympathizers in advance, reports that the reader 'thinks very well' of the work. So elated is he

that he has announced to this crowd that he cannot consent to take less than £100—'not a penny less,' he puts it. Presently he is informed that the firm will be happy to bring out his work in superior style, taking all charges, paper, print, advertising (all duly enumerated), as though conceding him special advantages, being at all the risks, too, on condition of his contributing a certain sum in cash 'down,' after which they engage to divide 'all' profits.

Under this mortifying shock—'your insulting offer'—the work is haughtily demanded back, and arrives 'registered' for safety—a refinedly sarcastic touch. Hurriedly sent on its travels again (it requires much art and practice 'to hide the ravages of time and travel' on its features, which grow seared and wrinkled like an old mariner's), it returns, and goes forth again with the abrupt hurry of a Queen's messenger.

Now comes the second stage. He will concede—yield so far as to accept the odious 'sharing terms.' This is announced to his female friends, who cry out loudly, and somewhat pettishly he will for once yield to this 'swindling system.' 'After all, he ran no risk; it was a great compliment to the merit of the book.'

Again it goes to the publishers, and the author, making the most of his concessions, like one signing an extorted treaty, announces coldly that he is prepared to yield, that they must have their way, he supposes. The reply comes. They fear he has totally misapprehended. They would be delighted to introduce his work to public notice, but it is impossible save under deposit of a sum not less than £70.

Stung to fury, our author again demands back his work *instantly*. It is a mortifying situation enough. But as time rolls on, and the unhappy manuscript lies in his drawer—an infant on the doorstep—the craving comes on him again ; some fictions which he has been compelled to resort to to hide his repulse will soon have to be 'taken up. After all, it would come back in the next edition ; no one need know, not even Mrs. ——. So he again approaches the firm.

Again the bundle is packed and sent forth, and after some haggling the firm abates—will take £60. The money could be ill spared, it may be ; a fresh fiction is devised for Mrs. ——, and at last the 'Dean's Second Wife,' 'Mary Latimer's Love,' 'Lord Alwyn's Trust,' 'Dodsworth's Divorce,' 'Mary's Mystery,' out of which half-

dozen titles there was actually chosen No. 2, 'Mary Latimer's Love,' comes out.

After being scornfully handled by one or two reviews — one ends 'Fie! Mr. ——, but don't do it again'—the author receives the usual 'hurt' letter from the publishers, who are resigned, however, 'dead loss,' 'serious injury,' 'miscalculation,' etc., being the words used. Vanity, or rather complacent over-estimate, in this curious way leads many through these downward stages, accepting what they had before declined, and finding excuses for so doing.

A delusion under which the neophyte often labours is that the average editor is ever 'on the look-out' for talent. Certain good-natured members of the fraternity have ere now been heard to say with mild surprise: 'Can you suppose that we should not be only too happy to get hold of a really good thing?' The truth is, they have waded through piles of MS. only to find the one dead level of incapacity. The editor, whether of book, newspaper, or magazine, has his own regular following, not to say staff, and is often embarrassed to satisfy the claims of the regular hands. He no more wants assistance than does a bank want clerks. Tables, and chairs even,

are to be seen piled up with fat bundles which Mrs. X. and Miss Y. and Mr. Z., with others of the obscure and unknown, have sent in to him. Time for reading such things cannot be found, and to read a manuscript is ever a slow and irksome process. Even the professional 'reader' has his 'short way,' and deals only with specially recommended things. The ordinary contribution of commerce is returned with a polite circular of refusal, unread or even unlooked at.

How, then, is a person with a taste for writing ever to get a *hearing* or a seeing for his productions? As I said at starting, everybody writes nowadays—young and old, boys and girls, big and little, and young ladies above all, for someone has divided the community into men, women, and *young ladies*, who are perhaps the most important. All, as I say, write, or want to write, or to be helped to write, and, above all, to be read when they have written. And how is this to be done in the enormous crowd pressing forward? The popular delusion is that all that is wanted is a first *good introduction to an editor, which often leads* to an acceptance and insertion. Occasionally this happens, but far oftener it does not, for the space in magazines is small, and the con-

tributors legion. The reason of this failure is that the beginner knows nothing about his craft. He has written what pleased himself, not what suited the magazine, not what is new or striking, or what is suited to the season. He thinks it a wonderful feat to have written at all.

The thoughtful, wary candidate will cast about seriously in his choice of a subject. He will note things that have not been treated ; he will see what is in the air, and calculate what is likely to attract the editor's eye.

A strikingly *àpropos* subject, with proof of special knowledge, arriving at the moment when such is wanted, is likely enough to be welcomed. But this is a reversal of the ordinary conditions. The informed writer writes *because* he has the knowledge ; in ordinary cases the writer looks for knowledge because he *wants* to write.

Workmen whose stories are always up to a pretty fair and respectable standard, whose 'copy' is up to time, who can turn out a bright article for a newspaper, or a short story for a magazine, or the regular 'three-decker' for the libraries— this kind of diligent literary purveyor may always count on a fair professional income. Perhaps it may amount to no more than what the

ordinary medical practitioner or small solicitor may earn. But, then, there is no particular reason why it should be more; and if the writer relishes and enjoys his work—if he do not, he ought not to be doing it, or will find it the most odious of drudgeries—he has at least compensations that are denied to most of his competitors in professional life.

And here I may say there is no such wide delusion as that of the belief in translations. A young lady reads an interesting French or German novel, and she thinks, Why should not I make a few pounds? Translations are not wanted—there is even a prejudice against works on foreign subjects. To begin with, there is no such awful drudgery as translation. Original writing is about three times as fast—indeed, professional translators always dictate to a shorthand writer, which adds seriously to the expense. But, besides this, translation is AN ART. Our translatress supposes that when she has done the work into fair English her task is finished. Not at all. There is the special style of the author to be caught and rendered, which can only be done by a person of literary training.

Of course, in spite of all these difficulties and

drawbacks, genius and ability will make its way. Many instances could be given of sudden and romantic success—a success often owing to chance or accident. I have often speculated that, as accident has sometimes brought forward successful works, so may accident have often prevented other works being brought forward which would have been even *more* successful. How many Scotts and Dickenses may we not have lost in this way! For it is impossible to assume that all our geniuses have found their opportunity, or have escaped being cut off in their early years.

It is, indeed, certain that many a work has thus been lost to fame. The 'History of Writing' is full of these dramatic chances. The tale 'Called Back,' which had such extraordinary celebrity, perhaps owed its success to its being casually taken up by Mr. Labouchere, who wrote extravagantly in its praise. Mr. Gladstone, in the same way, has made the fortune of several books. Witness 'John Inglesant.' We know the extraordinary success of 'Robert Elsmere,' and many others of the kind.

Not to leave too gloomy an impression of the hopelessness of getting one's productions accepted, I may say there *is one chance* which sometimes

turns out successfully. There are often young ladies who combine writing tastes with a prepossessing exterior and sympathetic manners, and such I have known to go with their MS. in their hands and beard the lion in his den—that is to say, visit the editor and tell their artless story. And I have known several instances in which they have succeeded.

But it is a heart-breaking business on the whole; so tremendous is the struggle and competition in writing, that it has become almost a *manufacture*. We know those penny collections of stories—*novelettes*—penny novels and the like, which literally stream from the press. These, I am assured, are supplied, and eagerly supplied, at the rate of £5 for every 25,000 words. Nay, even this starvation wage is, as it were, *sweated*, and the contractor will sub-let his contract for half the amount, or say £2 10s. In New York there is a regular company for the manufacture of stories on a large scale. A number of persons are employed to search the daily papers for exciting police cases, murders, adventures and the like. These are abstracted and formed into skeletons of stories, which are sent out to professional writers to be worked up into regular tales.

Among these doubtful arts there is the not very creditable one of manufacturing new stories out of old ones, akin to that of treating old shoes, which are ingeniously repaired and brightened up, 'translated' the odd term is, with the view of obtaining money on them from a pawnbroker. The system is this: A novel some twenty or thirty years old is taken, the names are altered, the dialogue reshaped and compressed, and the whole made to take a new form. Only the author is likely to recognise his work. There used to be a regular traffic in this sort of thing, and the 'editor,' as he may be called, was accustomed to give out the story which he wished to be treated in this fashion.

An interesting question now suggests itself. In case of success, is the success worth the labour, or, in homely phrase, 'Does writing pay?' Are the literary labourers—hodmen, trowel-men, foremen, and so on, up to the literary architects and designers—are these working on good wages? To answer this question we must classify. There is the grand success, when the town and the kingdom, and the English-speaking world generally, run 'horn-mad' after a book, as in the case of 'King Solomon's Mines' and 'Robert Elsmere.'

It would almost seem that the public *must* have some 'splash' of this kind periodically—some book to run after and ask for. But it is to be noted that the more ephemeral and trivial the work is, the more evanescent is the success. The *coup* cannot be struck twice. I have already pointed out how precarious is success. The author of 'She' is already subsiding. 'Bootles' Baby' has had no successors in popularity. The best specimen of this craze was the case of the late Hugh Conway, with his 'Called Back.' This was really the common tap which had been spouting for years from *Bow Bells*, the *London Journal*, and other casks, where the quality was almost as good. Pursued by publishers, and contracted for three and four deep, this unhappy writer practically exhausted himself in his first effort. The public soon fell away and sought a new favourite.

Now, these phenomena are not the things that really 'pay' the author. Distribute the produce of the first *coup* over a number of years of attempts and failures, and it may represent £200 a year, or less. One of the most popular of our authoresses is said to receive £1,000 regularly for each of her stories; but she takes some seven or eight years to prepare one. On the other

hand, we have Miss Braddon, whose stories come forth with the steady punctuality of a magazine or an annual, and Mr. Walter Besant, and the late Mrs. Henry Wood, and Wilkie Collins. These represent the system of continuous work—sustained, level, interesting work. The authors have got their public by slow, quiet, steady exertion, and hold their place. Profit on this system is far better than on the other, which is often only for 'once and away.'

Mrs. Henry Wood was the most satisfactory writer with whom any publisher could do business; owing to her years of steady popularity her old novels sold as well as the new. Miss Braddon, by careful management, keeps all her works at all prices before the public at the same time. Mr. Besant works much on the same system, and has judiciously adopted the *rôle* of the sound, useful family physician, instead of the dashing practitioner who is called in on a special occasion. This is a paying reputation to get—that of the safe, dependable family novelist.

From the comparison of these two systems it will be seen that the second is the more profitable. In fact, it is almost better *not* to be splendidly successful at all. As in other professions, it is the

plodding business-like man that makes the income. A practised versatility in various subjects and styles, a placing of your eggs in a number of baskets—this is the way, or one of the ways, to make writing pay. And looking at the novelist's business *as* a business, it may be said, in general terms, that it is a business by which, when he is once fairly started, the practitioner can live. He may never have a great success, for to obtain that depends on genius, on luck, on public caprice, on many things on which no man can reckon.

CHAPTER IV.

LITERARY STRUGGLES AND EXPERIENCES.

It may now be well for me to give some of my own early experiences, were it only to show how a novice in days now rather remote could contrive to get himself enlisted in the ranks of the regular 'writing men.' These details will, perhaps, prove to have an interest for the enormous crowd of aspirants who are struggling to 'get into print,' and who possibly find it an almost hopeless business. I should not be justified in passing by this episode, as I may fairly say that no one has contributed more in the way of serial productions, novels, travels, biographies, short stories and essays, to the general store.

Having always had a taste for writing—a sort of enthusiasm, almost—I had, with no little difficulty and perseverance, obtained entrance into that sober and instructive magazine, *Chambers's*

Edinburgh Journal, then directed by Mr. Leitch Ritchie. My contribution was, I think, called 'Dr. Manutius,' and was a little romance founded on 'Book-hunting,' then, as now, a great hobby of mine. The editor gave me praise and encouragement. 'Your sketch,' he wrote, 'is pleasant and humorous, and shows observation. It shall appear. N.B.—Our remuneration is one pound per printed page.' This, if short, was to the point, and encouraging.

Next, a happy chance brought me into connection with Mr. John Forster, then at the height of his activity, full of energy, and recognised as an important personage in the critical world, and, above all, as the confidential friend and adviser of Charles Dickens. Having done him some slight service, he very kindly took the beginner under his patronage. It was a joyful day for me when he put my unpretending article in his pocket, and walked down with it to Wellington Street. There was long a tradition at the office that he had stridden in after his own sturdy fashion and peremptorily required that what he brought should be attended to at once, and without any of the conventional excuses. From that hour my literary fortune 'was made,' and to the present moment

my humble pen, never relaxing even for a day, has been kept profitably at work.

There are few writers on the periodical press who have attained their object with such ease, or found the way so pleasantly smoothed for them. This was, of course, owing to no special merit in the candidate, beyond a certain versatility, as well as instinct of what was most likely to suit the paper. A hint or slight direction was sufficient, and I noted that the most constantly successful contributors were those who had discovered this little secret. With what delight I, almost at once, received the following letter from the editor!—

'Office of *Household Words*
'(A weekly journal conducted by Charles Dickens),
'No. 16, Wellington Street North,
'Strand,
'*July* 3, 1856.

'DEAR SIR,

'Mr. Forster will perhaps have informed you that your sketch, "At the Sign of the Cor d'Argent," is very acceptable for publication in *Household Words*. It will appear in an early number.

'Mr. Dickens would be glad to hear from you again; especially, should it meet your views, he

would like to ask a contribution from you to an extra number published at Christmas. It consists of a collection of tales, and when the plan of it has been arranged, I shall have the pleasure of sending you a copy.

'Believe me to be, dear sir,

'Your obedient servant,

'W. H. Wills.'

This was encouraging. At the very first effort not only to be cordially welcomed into the ranks and invited to help, but to receive a coveted decoration, as it were, and to find a place in the 'Christmas Extra Number,' and be read by 100,000 persons!

The story in question, 'At the Sign of the Silver Horn,' a French tale of a gloomy wayside inn so named, was, if I may be permitted to say so, an effective and dramatic one. It was well calculated to attract Dickens, whose taste was exactly in this direction. He relished the French tone and the dash of mystery, and, indeed, it was laid out on the pattern of his own stories. This, as I said before, is too little attended to by writing aspirants, who write what suits or pleases themselves, without sufficiently considering the fancies

of the editor, or the prevailing tone and flavour of his journal.

I had already written a novel, which month by month had passed through a local magazine. There was a very accessible firm at that time, yclept Saunders and Otley, who were rather 'sporting' in their ventures, and always on the 'look-out' for budding talent.* This firm published a story of mine called 'Mildrington, the Barrister,' which met with little success. After an interval I meditated another novel, and before beginning thought of a bold measure, and, as I have already related, sent 'Mildrington,' by way of a specimen, to Mr. Richard Bentley, who was then the head of the firm in New Burlington Street. The type of publisher of those days was somewhat different from what it is now, and of a more adventurous kind.

The almost romantic discovery of 'Jane Eyre' encouraged the notion that talent might lie con-

* The story of the angry author who visited their office used to be often told. He had attacked one of the firm, who naturally protested, on which the author said: 'I'm sure I'm willing to apologize; but I say if you're Saunders, d——n Otley; and if you're Otley, d——n Saunders!'

cealed in the most unexpected quarters, in parsonages and country towns. So few were the writers of talent, and so poor was the average 'circulating library novel,' that any story written with spirit, and different from the common hackneyed type, was sure of a welcome. An excellent specimen was 'Lady Lee's Widowhood,' the work of a soldier, the late General Hamley, a story which can still be read with enjoyment.*

Mr. Bentley received my approaches with much encouragement. He read my story, and asked me to call upon him. It is always an anxious moment for the aspirant—somewhat akin to the waiting in 'the parlour' to see the eminent dentist or surgeon—when his name is taken into the inner office; still more so when he is asked to 'step this way.' That passage has since become

* This very accomplished man was a unique specimen of the *literary* soldier. Scarcely sufficient credit has been given him for his many gifts. He had commanded in the field, and had won many decorations. He had been a professor, and had written with much success on the 'Operations of War.' But it was to literary work and to literary men that he was drawn by a fascination that seemed irresistible. He haunted the Athenæum Club, and not the club of the Services opposite. He was always seen, not with the men of his own profession, but with painters, writers, poets—*e tutti quanti.* He was a well-trained writer, and wrote to the last.

very familiar; the 'old hand' enters with little of the old trepidation.

I see him now, a small, energetic man, with gray hair, keen eyes, and pinkish face, rather original in his manners, a little flowery in speech. I found him most cordial and friendly. 'I have read your story, and like it,' he said. 'Write me another as good, and I shall publish it and give you £150.' This seemed to the modest candidate magnificent.

I set to work and produced 'Bella Donna; or, The Cross before the Name,' by 'Gilbert Dyce'—for there was much coyness or shyness then in setting your real name to a book, mainly, I believe, from dread of 'the reviews.' There used to be terrible critical onslaughts in the *Saturday Review* particularly, from which it was fancied a man could never recover. He might not wither away like poor Keats, but the sense of mortification, and perhaps disgrace, was supposed to stick to him for ever. He fancied that he would be pointed out by his friends as the man who was so fearfully 'cut up' by the *Saturday*.

From that hour my connection with Mr. Bentley continued unbroken till his death, and was always of the most agreeable kind. With his son and

successor the same pleasant relations have been maintained.* 'Bella Donna' was successful, and

* Later we planned a sort of popular biography of the Prince Consort, but as it occurred to me that it might not be altogether acceptable in high quarters, I applied to Colonel Ponsonby, who wrote a very courteous letter, saying that a life was in hand, and asking, almost as a favour, that the scheme might be laid aside. I mention this trifling matter merely to introduce the publisher's friendly and sympathetic letter :

'My dear Sir,' he wrote,

'I am disappointed at your disappointment. But I am not surprised. The dear lady naturally wishes, with her intense love of the memory of that excellent man as well as Prince, that such a life should emanate from herself.

'I am heartily glad to be in communication with you again. Our literary connection was never snapped asunder, however. Charles Dickens is a steady friend, and I rejoice you have an arena for your pen in his interesting periodical, which well deserves to take rank with the best of the serials of our day.

'In olden time, when I was in a manner somewhat connected with the *Gentleman's Magazine*, it was a very good property. When it ceased to be so, Mr. Nichols, my cousin, sold it to Parker, of Oxford. In his hands it was not successful, and it then passed into the hands of Messrs. Bradbury and Evans (or, rather, Mr. Agnew, of Manchester), and now I observe Mr. Allen, of Waterloo Place, is to take it up. "Never have anything to say to a dying publication," once said to me the author of "Lothair," as we walked up Piccadilly together, when I talked of taking up the old *Monthly Review*. And he was right. Allen will now throw some more good money into the gutter, I expect.

speedily enjoyed a second edition ; and again the publisher was pleased. In a cheap form it still sells.

At a later stage I was dreaming of a story that should appear in *All the Year Round* 'one of these days' — that always indistinctly remote period. I had before ventured on a sort of *coup d'essai* in the shape of a short story—not so long as a volume—which was called 'Lorelei,' and this my friends in Wellington Street good-naturedly had set up in type to give it every chance of a fair judgment. But it was found wanting. Later, Dickens chanced to read—for he read most of the new stories—'Bella Donna,' and was good enough to say he was much struck by it. He at once commissioned me to write a regular, official serial for *All the Year Round*—a proposal which I accepted with enthusiasm.

It is pleasant to recall an autumn day, September 3, 1864, when, at Chester Station, I bought the number that contained the opening of my story, and read in a bill on the walls—a bill five or six feet long, printed in huge black and red

'Send me, please, "Beauty Talbot," and it shall have my attention. Is it in three volumes, or two?

'Sincerely yours,

'RICHARD BENTLEY.'

characters, on a flaming orange ground—the name of my story,

'NEVER FORGOTTEN.'

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'BELLA DONNA.'

SEE 'ALL THE YEAR ROUND,'

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

I always look back with delight to that long and pleasant connection with the great novelist and his journal; no form of literary work could have been more enjoyable. It made a life in itself—one lived in the journal. One's very thoughts were perpetually at work in its interest. Life itself became almost a series of papers. I wrote for it, read for it, travelled for it. For *All the Year Round* I wrote no less than six regular novels: 'Never Forgotten,' 'The Second Mrs. Tillotson,' 'The Dear Girl,' 'Fatal Zero,' 'The Doctor's Mixture,' 'The Bridge of Sighs,' together with shorter stories that filled several numbers, such as 'Tom Butler' (of which the editor used to write, 'Where, O where, is "Tom Butler"?'), 'Howard's Son,' and 'School Days at Saxonhurst,' 'Autobiography of a Boy,' etc. There were also long accounts of travelling

excursions, covering a score of numbers and more. I may, indeed, add with some pardonable pride that my humble efforts were always welcomed and acceptable, and went straight to the press without perusal.

Occasionally there arrived remonstrances from persons who fancied that some sketch in the journal affected their reputation. Thus I had written an account of a famous and well-known personage in Paris, who designed dress for the fashionable world, under the title of 'The Great Man-Milliner.' Something had been stated as to the early life of this personage, which the editor rectified in this pleasant sarcastic fashion:

NOTE ON THE GREAT MAN-MILLINER.

We have been asked to state that Mr. ——, of Paris, whose proficiency in the millinery art was described at p. 564, did not begin life as a tailor, but as an apprentice to 'one of the most celebrated silk mercers at the West End of London.'

In the autumn of 1869 I was at Homburg, then in its heyday, though still unconscious that the fatal war of 1870 was at hand, which was to cause the downfall of its chief attraction. Like all the world, I found a strange fascination in the spectacle of the glittering gaming-rooms, not so much in the sums of money perpetually being lost

and won, as in the display of character and eddying passions of greed and despair. There I conceived the idea of a psychological story, based on the study of a mind, secure in its own strict virtue, even warning others against the fatal results of this terrible vice, with the stages of a regular fall and catastrophe minutely traced.

By the time I returned to London it was almost finished. I took it down to the office, where I found Dickens himself in charge. He made me sketch the design for him, and I could see that it struck him. At this time he had been deprived of the services of his faithful Wills, and I could not but be struck by the sort of helpless, weary air with which he sat—solitary in his office—having for a time to attend personally to all sorts of trifling details. He had, indeed, lost his 'right-hand man' and second self. No devotion or exertion of others could supply that long well-trained experience. I brought him the MS., which he at once put in hand. I can always remember with pleasure that he thought highly of it, and find in his letters many strong recommendations of it.*

* At the risk of being set down as 'egotistical,' 'conceited,' etc., I will quote his words: 'I think,' he wrote to one of his

The Briarean system of 'running' two or three stories at a time is rarely seen nowadays, the reason being that there are now so many competitors, and such a crowd of 'popular' writers, that there are few openings. The candidates stand in ranks many deep. In the old days it was in the hands of an accepted few, who, like the music-hall performers, did their 'turns' on many stages. The writer who has the ear, or, rather, the eye of the public, if he be wise, will appear at rare intervals; but this requires an extraordinary gift of restraint and self-denial. Charles Reade would only write when he felt impelled to write; George Eliot, George Meredith, had their flashes of silence; and nothing is more remarkable or encouraging than the brilliant reappearance of Mr. Thomas Hardy, after, I suppose, a ten years' retreat, who has obtained a new lease of popularity with his

friends, 'you will find "Fatal Zero" a very curious bit of mental development, deepening as the story goes on into a picture not more startling than true.' And to Mr. Fields in America: 'You will find "Fatal Zero" a very curious analysis of mind as the story advances.' And to Wilkie Collins: 'I have read the whole of "Fatal Zero," and it is exceedingly well wrought out.' A popular French writer, I find, has taken from it the motive and treatment in a story called 'Zero.'

'Tess.' I must make frank confession that I myself was a great sinner in this respect—perhaps from a too great eagerness 'to make hay while the sun shone.' For one of the small minnows it was difficult to resist the flattering and profitable invitations to write in various periodicals; and the only thing in the nature of a rebuke I ever received from the amiable and tolerant editor was in this respect. Only a few weeks before his death he wrote to me:

'My dear F.,

'You make me very uneasy on the subject of your new long story here, by sowing your name broadcast in so many fields at once, and undertaking such an impossible amount of fiction at one time. Just as you are coming on with us you have another story in progress in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and another announced in *Once a Week*, and, so far as I know the art we both profess, it cannot be reasonably pursued in this way. . . . These considerations are so much upon my mind, that I cannot forbear representing them to you, in the hope that they may induce you to take a little more into account the necessity of care and prepara-

tion, and some self-denial in the quantity done. I am quite sure that I write fully as much in your own interest as in that of *All the Year Round*.'

The reader will note the forbearance, and even modesty, of this admirable man, and compare with it, if he please, what would be the summary language of an ordinary editor. Some lines of genuine regret for having been so thoughtless, with an offer to release him from the engagement, brought this kindly response:

'My dear F.,

'Of course the engagement between us is to continue, and I am sure you know me too well to suppose that I have ever had a thought to the contrary. Your explanation (as it naturally would be, being yours) is manly and honest, and I am both satisfied and hopeful.'

Such was the always kind and trustful Dickens.*

* When Miss Hogarth and Miss Dickens were collecting the letters, these were published with the rest, but without the name of the person to whom they were written. An ingenious, laborious writer, however, set to work to discover the concealed name, and by searching out the advertisements of the day was enabled to announce to the public that I was the person addressed!

In those days there was a hard, almost desperate struggle for anyone who would earn his bread by his pen. Nothing is more enjoyable or encouraging than for a person with a moderate competence and a genuine ardour for writing to enter on this 'primrose path.' According to Sir Walter's phrase, it should be his walking-stick, not his crutch. There is no pressure; he can afford to wait until his productions find a place. His gains are the more welcome because they are not absolutely necessary to him. Nothing can be more delightful than writing under such conditions. It is all rose-colour. But when it becomes a profession, and you have to 'get your bread' by writing, it is astonishing what a complete change takes place—how meagre the results, how difficult, painful even, to obtain work; how the intervals lengthen out, how everything seems to fail and the openings to close up. This I speedily found when I took the bold step of 'coming to town' and venturing all in the struggle for life in the cold, cruel immensity of the Metropolis. Never shall I forget the sense of desolation with which I sat down under these new conditions to write an article of a jocular kind for some small magazine. Instead of the easy,

buoyant, irresponsible carelessness, there was now an anxious deliberation and a sense of drudgery.

But I soon discovered that to 'get on' other qualities must be exerted besides the mere power of writing. The truth, I believe, is that you can really succeed in literature only by the means by which you succeed in other professions. That is, by hard work, readiness, tact, versatility, watching your opportunities, making yourself useful, striking in at the proper moment; above all, by making friends and connections. You must learn also to push yourself, to furnish promptly something that is wanted promptly.

Of course, I assume there is a gift of writing, a knowledge of the craft. But mere ability, without knowing how to make the most of it, mere talent, without what may be called these *diplomatic* gifts, will not avail. Hence the advantage of being on the spot, at the centre, in London, where you can watch for and seize on any opening, and hence the sheer hopelessness of those who despatch by post packets of MS. with letters. These have little chance of being attended to, whereas the person on the spot hears the earliest news of any opening that occurs.

In illustration of this, I recollect a young man

who had made an early marriage, who when casting about for something to do, announced to his family that he had resolved to 'become a literary man.' He had never written, but it turned out that he had these very qualifications that I spoke of. To my astonishment, I found him in two or three years in fair employment, and acting as a sort of assistant editor. He was pushing, and knew how to deal with men. He *had made himself useful.* That was his secret. Now he has a paper and magazine of his own, and supports a family in comfort.

I acted for some time as dramatic critic of the *Observer*, in which duty I was succeeded by my friend, that acute, judicious critic, Ernest Bendall. It was a pleasing excitement, when the play was over, to find one's self at midnight in one of the office-rooms, under the flaring gas, writing against time, the printers sending up for copy.*

Later on I became the dramatic critic of the *Whitehall Review*, a post I retained for a great

* I think I may claim that no one has written more books on the stage than I have. Witness this list: 'The Life of Garrick,' 'Lives of the Kembles,' 'Romance of the English Stage,' 'Life of Alexandre Dumas,' 'Principles of Comedy and Dramatic Effect,' 'The Art of the Stage,' 'The Art of Acting,' 'The Life of Irving,' with many more.

many years. This furnished the opportunity of attending 'first nights' and *matinées*, about which—the latter, I mean—there is a strange, gruesome fascination. The stage is, after all, a very false, unreal thing, but once bound to it, it is difficult to set one's self free. *Qui a bu, boira.*

It certainly was a struggle, or, as Traddles said, 'a pull,' those early attempts at getting on. It was exciting enough, too, from the alternations of failure and success. I tried my hand at everything—magazine work, newspaper work, biographies, novels, criticisms. It was at this time, as I have mentioned before, that I was 'driving' three novels abreast. 'I did,' as it is called, exhibitions, shows, opening of places of entertainment, and such things, for the newspapers. This was serving in the ranks and beginning at the bottom; but excellent training it was. I would not part with the recollections of those arduous days for anything.

For those who are in the servitude, the drudging routine of the press has little that is romantic or interesting. It seems hodman's work. I am certain, however, that the regular 'literary man,' as he is called, is always hankering after brilliant but ephemeral appearances in some 'dashing'

newspaper. The official 'book' is but a slow business; its appearance, however dignified, can only take place at long intervals. But the flashing out in an evening paper with something spirited, and certain to be in the hands of thousands before night, is more attractive and exciting.

It is curious, by the way, how the consciousness of the form and character of the organ, I won't say 'vehicle,' for which he is writing, will affect the style. Our thoughts marshal themselves according to the journal for which they are wanted, and we are compelled almost irresistibly to write in one fashion for the *St. James's Gazette*, in another for the *Illustrated London News*, in yet another for the *Cornhill* and other magazines. The docile images present themselves in different guises, and course through different channels. In these early days of 'coming upon town' I felt a piquant sense of pride in having to do with that 'mighty engine,' the Press. And though not a 'pressman,' as it is called, I have always found myself drawn to the 'press' and to 'pressmen,' with a feeling compounded of reverence and partiality. The sight of a great newspaper printing-office in Fleet Street, the presses thundering and dashing and flinging off the damp

sheets, has for me something of grandeur. I can never refuse any 'job' offered me by a newspaper, for I am heart and soul with them.

It might seem a Herculean task, for a neophyte almost, to pass the barriers of one of the great London newspapers. Yet I always look back with singular pleasure to a bold *coup* which I once made in this way, a long time ago. It was two or three years after the war, and the term of grace for the Homburg gambling-tables was just about to expire. I had not been long 'on town' seeking my fortune; it was a day or two after Christmas, and the famous *tripôt* was to be shut up on the last day of the year. It suddenly occurred to me that here was a dramatic scene, worth describing or picturing in some way, and that would have an almost historical interest. I wrote to two newspapers, one the *Daily News*, then in all the flush of its reputation from its triumphant war-correspondence, the other, I think, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, offering to visit the expected scene and describe it. I always had a passion for expeditions, or anything approaching to an expedition; the flutter, and hurry, and general excitement of such things have a fascination. I recall the delight with

which I received a letter from the manager of the *Daily News*, Sir J. Robinson, now the editor, whom I have long known and esteemed, inviting me to meet him that night at the Reform Club without fail. That night, in the hall of the club, we had settled the affair, it need not be said with what exhilaration on my side. For one who had just started in the wilds of London to find himself sent out specially as an agent of one of the leading newspapers was an encouraging thing.

That Christmas journey through Belgium and Germany had a pleasant holiday flavour. There were still traces of the disastrous war, and I remember at Calais the awkwardness and restraint between the French officials and the German passengers. Not long before, on another expedition, I had found a curious feeling of surprise in noting the carriages of the Chatham and Dover Railway drawn up to serve as the Paris train, the friendly company having helped their neighbours in this way. At Brussels there was then a long wait in the dark morning. Most delightful and original was the feeling of seeing the Rhine at Christmas-time, the trees bare of foliage. But under any conditions the noble river is ever welcome.

We got to Frankfort very late that night, and

I descended at the sign of the Roman Emperor, only to be told that by an energetic *coup* the gambling-rooms had been closed the day before, to obviate the certain disorders of the last hours. I went out, however, to 'Homburg on the Heights,' and there was much to be seen in these hours of its dissolution. The day was fine and mild, and the charming place looked attractive enough. In the gilded halls, officials were busy making inventories of furniture, etc. There was hardly a soul about. I contrasted this desolation with its glittering heyday, as I had seen it a couple of years before, when it appeared like Fairyland, all brilliancy, happiness, and holiday. I wandered through its bosquets, peopling them anew. I had thought, however, of my mission, and picked up a good deal of dramatic news. An odd experience was the visit to the Telegraph Office, an interview with a gruff German official, who stared, as well he might, at the long despatch in English handed to him, on what interesting subject in that place of desolation he could not conceive. All languages are, of course, the same to the telegraph. I lingered about the place nearly the whole day, and got home the next day towards evening, when I sat down to my desk and wrote

long into the night, filling a couple of columns descriptive of the place, which duly appeared on the next morning. That experience, trivial as it may be, I would not part with for a good deal.

The working writing man who is 'on the press' finds many things for his hand to do. Most of my friends furnish criticisms on pictures, exhibitions of all kinds, describe shows, and at night attend the theatres. Further, they perform these heterogeneous duties exceedingly well, or at least as well as is necessary.* But the hard-worked writer finds a pleasant solace in the post of dramatic critic. Nothing is so agreeable. Not merely the attendance on 'first nights,' where friends meet and ideas are interchanged: more attractive still is the new and brilliant world that it opens—the whole cosmogony, as it were, of dramas old and new, with their associations, actors, theatres, managers, characters, and the rest, all which have a sort of fascination. It was pleasant to be introduced to such an atmosphere.

This suggests that odd form of 'entertainment' the 'Matinée,' which is really a unique thing and

* A writer on a newspaper, it will be seen, could not make a livelihood from the dramatic criticisms he furnishes. A new play appears only about once a fortnight or so.

sui generis. I have been an assiduous frequenter of these performances for a long series of years, and can give no idea of the curious exceptional tone of mind and feeling they engender, of half depression, half curiosity, and wonder. And yet you are held under some gruesome spell. You must see it out to the end. The plays themselves are sometimes bewildering. The actors go through their work with perfect loyalty and sincerity. Nowhere are to be found such perfect specimens of genuine burlesque. There comes back on me now an adaptation of one of Ouida's tales, called, I think, 'Chandos.' There were things in this which no one present would willingly let die. Such, for instance, as the 'Mad Duke,' so he was called, arrayed in his black, heavy fur-collared coat and modern 'wideawake' hat, who appeared, like so many of the characters, but for a few moments or spasms, and never came again. He it was who bought the Chandos property. He was played by a foreign actor called *Worth*, the very richness of his garb grotesquely suggesting his famous namesake, fortified, too, by the announcement that it was 'his first appearance in England.' The 'Mad Duke,' by the way, seemed sane enough—in everything save his

dress. Then there was the venerable old man in modern coat and trousers, but who was, alas! totally blind, leaning on a long 'sapling,' such as Meg Merrilies always flourishes. This he used like a woodman's spear. His infirmity did not appear to affect him, for he was constantly saying, '*I will see you again*,' or 'when I *see* you again'; while others would invite him—the 'poor blind'—to '*lead* on: I will follow.' This was, indeed, the blind leading those who see. The scene of the revel, where Chandos, a fair-haired youth in velvet knickerbockers, his shoes set off with satin bows, sat, surrounded by the fair—champagne, grapes, etc., covering the board—seemed to convey the very ideal of those epicurean joys with which voluptuaries satiate themselves.

But the grand scene was in the third act, I think, a studio in Rome, where a lovely girl in crimson satin and gold filigree lay asleep on the sofa, the bewitching Chandos the while calmly mixing his colours, setting his palette, etc. An Abbé, apparently belonging to some strange, unknown, or newly-created order, with an enormous red cross down his side, entered suddenly, and bitterly reproached the artist with having decoyed the beautiful girl on the sofa, who had some relation-

ship to the Abbé or 'Abbey,' as he was called. The artist put the thing in its proper light, so that the 'Abbey' was quite softened, if not convinced, and went off under an obligation to the artist. Next a crowd of Garibaldians—about five or six in number—came in noisily with all the air of a tumultuous crowd. One carried a flag, and all ranged themselves behind a number of boxes that stood in a corner. Later a band of 'hated Austrian soldiery' burst in—three in number—led by a hussar officer in pink tights and Hessian boots, and who seemed ashamed of the vile work he was put to. The Garibaldians had no arms, and made no fight. Just as we expected the combat to begin, Chandos re entered with his lovely model, arrayed *à la* Franconi, and, quite ignoring the arrayed forces, encircled her waist, and proceeded in ardent terms to declare his passion. This took a long time, but the soldiers were in no hurry, and waited, listening, too, with much interest. Presently, however, the officer—he of the Hessians—bethought him that this was not exactly 'business,' or *his* business, and suddenly gave the signal, pointing with his 'scymitar.' Two shots, at the least, were discharged—on the stage one usually misses fire—

and three of the Garibaldians fell down behind the boxes. When the smoke cleared there was Chandos still clasping his mistress! The officer cast his eyes on the loving pair (every movement of his gave intense delight to the gallery), then looked at them with much curiosity, as well he might, for they were still proceeding with their love-making. The dying Garibaldians looked at them also. Recalled to himself, the officer again raised the 'scymitar'; the firearms were once more discharged. A woman in an ulster suddenly rushed in, crying aloud that the fair girl in the crimson satin was 'his (Chandos's) own daughter!' This is no unfair specimen of what is to be seen at the Matinée. I always note that the audience departs slowly and sadly, as though drugged.

One of the most dramatic scenes I ever witnessed was an Irish funeral at Killarney, of the old pattern. The party went from Dublin by railway, reaching the little town about nine o'clock of a winter's night. Here a procession was formed of a number of more or less undignified vehicles, which then were in fashion everywhere in Ireland, yclept 'covered cars,' almost the universal method of conveyance, of course

excepting the familiar and ever-welcome 'outside car.' It was a square box upon wheels, the door of entrance at the back; and this, when the passengers wished to enter or get out, was 'backed' on to the pavement with a vigorous jolt, much as a coal-van is when delivering its burden. A train of these truly unpicturesque vehicles, duly formed in solemn procession, set out slowly through the lighted streets—all crowded with people, and suggesting a foreign town—for the Cathedral. A sort of savage music heralded us; a band of women, old and young, who were filling the air with their passionate wailings, and sobs, and shrieks, that subsided not even for a moment. It was not unmusical; as a performance it had some art and never flagged. When the stately Cathedral was reached, the lights and shadows of the great porch and the gathered crowds presented an effective scene. Then the extraordinary orchestra was to be heard again: some seven or eight wailers or 'keeners,' who now redoubled their efforts as the coffin was borne in. They were tossing their arms, beating their breasts, and tears—real tears—were streaming down their faces! The suggestion was as of something highly savage or Indian.

The coffin was left there for the night, and next morning the train again re-formed, the grotesque covered cars falling into line as before. The way was through the beautiful arbutus-lined lanes and roads, on to Old Muckross Abbey: among those exquisite ruins the defunct was to be laid. Again the 'keeners' led the way; they were even more passionate in their exertions than on the preceding night. Such intense sorrow could not be imagined; it might be fancied that the party had lost father, mother, all their relations at one fell swoop. Yet these were but professional 'artists,' highly paid, in great demand, and whom it was the correct thing to have at every respectable funeral. There was a droll scrap of bathos at the grave. As the clergyman was waiting to begin his functions, prayer-book in hand, the din rose more and more obstreperous. Irritated by the interruption, the undertaker rushed forward, and, with something like violence, ordered the 'keeners' to hold their peace. He seized one and shook her vigorously; instantly the wailing ceased as if by magic, the ladies becoming composed. . . .

As we walk about our London, and enjoy the scenes of life and character which are perpetually

presenting themselves, there occasionally turns up some highly picturesque and pleasing combination. Indeed, the City at all seasons offers something that is unfamiliar, with striking things which, if seen in a foreign city, would appear novel, and be retained in the memory. On some dark November evening, for instance, after the day's labour, I wander down to the Embankment. How freshly blows the air from the river, which is lined with long rows of dotted lights, while the waters look black, and full, and menacing! I walk down to the landing-stage at Blackfriars, and stand under the vast bridge, whose giant arches loom out like monster buildings over our heads. A few shadowy, indistinguishable figures are waiting. Suddenly out of the darkness a red light and sounds of plashing are approaching; one of the little river steamers comes up; we go on board and are borne away up to Westminster. It seems the middle of the night! The city on both sides seems buried in slumber. A great barge drifts by. Far ahead, in the air, is the blazing dial of the Westminster Clock Tower. As I sit in the bows the air blows with a welcome freshness. The river seems vast and grand in its breadth. We stop

occasionally at the landings, and take in one or two more shadowy figures. There is no talk or sound, but all seems a midnight silence. It is difficult to believe that we are in the familiar London. Even the shadows seem gigantic. This is a cheap and original sensation. . . .

By some capricious chance, during a long course of years, I have been summoned at intervals to serve on special juries and coroners' inquests. Most persons contrive to escape this disagreeable duty, but I have never 'shirked' it, as it is called, for it seems only fitting and wholesome that everyone in the community should take his share in this sort of service. At the same time the call is made with a strange indifference to fairness. But apart from this righteous feeling, there is a sort of entertainment in the duty; you see much that is queer, odd, and out of the way. Nothing out of 'Pickwick' is more amusing than the grotesque and gradually acquired self-importance of the habitual juryman—his air of legal knowledge, his affected familiarity with the law, his vulgar forwardness in addressing the judge, who is often curiously tolerant. One delightful fellow I recall, who in the jury-room would walk up and down, his

hands under his coat-tails, his eyes on the ceiling, pausing now and again to say, 'It strikes me, gentlemen, in this way——'

Inquests are often distressing enough: and what is called the 'viewing of the body,' down in some charnel house, or in the cellars of the hospital, is a disagreeable thing. The only opportunity afforded for seeing death and its work is too often accompanied by the saddest personal associations. But here, nothing of that kind being present, it becomes a good discipline, and, as one of the 'Gamps' of the place might say, 'Which it is as good as any sermon.' Not less useful, too, is the habit fostered of forming judgments, and learning to find out the truth. Some of the scenes and strokes of character are often highly dramatic. It is nearly always the story of some fatal accident, and the natural grief of the bereaved ones is touching enough. Most of the persons come from alleys and courts, or the smaller shops, and the characters are often novel and singular in their quiet grotesqueness. I like, too, the 'Bob Sawyer' airs of the medical students 'in charge of the case,' who affect a careless, superior manner, and invariably carry a small box of surgical instruments, which they

obtrude as an emblem of their calling. Sometimes there are very tragical, painful cases. I was 'on' an inquest held in the old Sessions House at Westminster. The son of a well-to-do family, in trade, had married a good-looking young woman against the wishes of his parents —'a colonel's daughter,' as it was given out. A few weeks after the marriage a child was born, and the son, though kind and forbearing, announced that the mother should be sent back to her friends. It then turned out that she was only the daughter of a sergeant. A few days later the baby died, and after a medical examination it was contended that there had been violence used, and that its head had been crushed in. I was foreman, and never found myself in a more difficult or painful situation. Everyone in court, save the coroner, seemed to favour the unhappy young woman. There were fainting fits, etc., and during the suspension, the husband having come in, the two rushed into each other's arms. The moderate and experienced coroner took note of these melodramatic elements, and very earnestly warned the jury not to be led away by emotional views, but to consider seriously and strictly the evidence. This, however, was not

altogether satisfactory. The medical testimony was confined to one or two local practitioners, and it was reasonably thought that someone of greater reputation and experience should have been called in. The casualties, accidents, etc., to which infants are exposed are notorious. It seemed a terrible thing to associate 'wilful murder' with the unfortunate woman on such speculative evidence. We had an anxious discussion. Some hard-headed ones were inclined to severity; but, after much hesitation, I became her advocate, and with the aid of some others, succeeded in bringing the rest round to my view. The gaoler from the prison had already arrived, and was sitting near his anticipated prisoner. I shall never forget the general scene of rapture when I announced the good news. Husband and wife again fell into each other's arms.

Few people reflect how much it is in their own power to supply entertainment for themselves; and how many incidents, exhibitions, etc., are about them in London, whence they can extract a vast deal of enjoyment. This, however, is an art, and needs practice. We should cultivate the more unpretending pleasures; and here there is found opportunity for them in abundance. The

smaller pleasures of life are assuredly the most delightful; this was really the point of Sir G. Cornewall Lewis's memorable saying, that life would be tolerable but for its amusements—that is, its official registered amusements. A perfect train of such unassuming joys comes in the way of the writing man. Of course, if he has not cultivated the spirit just described and learned the art of enjoyment, everything will fall into a sort of routine; the proper associations and the poetical sense are lacking. But the writing man, from the very practice of his craft, sees things in a different way from ordinary persons. There is a perpetual suggestion of ideas and images: life for him becomes a series of little dramas. Hence it is infinitely more entertaining and dramatic.

So 'many-sided' indeed is life, that one would be inclined to hold that the observing writing man should foster all the tastes that he conveniently can. At every turn he will thus add to his stock of pleasures, and increase his enjoyments in the most extraordinary way. I am afraid these confessions will be thought somewhat egotistical, though I can say with sincerity that I have only wished to lift the veil a little for the

entertainment of my readers, and this can best be done, it seems to me, by personal experiences. I may, therefore, add that I have found the enjoyments of a literary life multiplied and enriched in the most wonderful way by cultivating tastes and accomplishments of all kinds, which, in return, have supplied thoughts and subjects innumerable for work, to say nothing of an unceasing and ever-varying enjoyment. The writing man who knows and loves music, who knows and loves pictures, who can play and sketch himself, who knows something of architecture, who is familiar with the stage and the pleasant laws of comedy, has so many distinct worlds in which he can live. As I have said before, all he sees is dramatic, and ministers to his entertainment.

No one reads so much as the writing man. It is his great relaxation and enjoyment. For the literary or 'writing man,' once the work of the busy day is done—the day's pleasures over, which so often entail labour, or, at least, trouble—the most enjoyable reading period sets in, when the curtains are drawn, and the street without has grown quiet—say from nine till nearly one in the morning. The soothing pipe accom-

panies and flavours the reading. It is difficult to conceive how welcome, how intense, is the enjoyment of reading under such conditions. At other periods it seems to lose its charm; or, as Ibsen says, becomes 'so irrelevant' that you cannot 'settle yourself' to it in the same way. It is like seeing a play by daylight—the suitable tone and scenery are wanting. I often wonder to see tranquil, quiet men at a club thus absorbed in their books in broad daylight. In the case of a novel it would seem difficult to abstract one's self from the cold, hard realities of life to follow the imaginary distresses of a heroine.

Reading, pursued thus eagerly for three and four hours at a time, tends, with practice, to become more and more rapid. With some this power is extraordinary. There are persons who, at a glance, can 'take in' the whole of a situation, or a scene. The practised reader does not so much read as *see*. One look at a page, and he is in possession of all that it contains. This was Dr. Johnson's way. Yet it is astonishing how many well-educated persons are actually constrained to read their newspaper word after word —you see them laboriously travelling along from beginning to end of each line without the least

suspicion of what is coming. Of course they enjoy many an agreeable surprise. What a contrast to the nimble, dashing reader who in a flash has absorbed half a column at a time and extracted the whole pith and marrow! Of course, with works of moment, where each sentence has a value, there must be slower progress and deliberation to have enjoyment. For the prolific writer, however, there are drawbacks to this facility; in the reading of his proofs particularly his corrective eye is apt to travel too fast and to overlook errors.

Three or four hours a night thus devoted to reading involves a goodly consumption of books, for which a modest collection would scarcely suffice. As it is, one has to read and re-read the whole stock many times over. Boswell's Johnson, it need hardly be said, bears this best of all, and is ever fresh and new. So do Dickens's stories, Macaulay's essays, Scott's and Jane Austen's novels—for they can surely be classed together. I have noticed this singularity in the case of Miss Austen's stories, that you entirely forget the course and turnings of the narrative, which you find quite a novelty on reperusal. This may be merely a personal ex-

perience, or perhaps deficiency. Though an ardent admirer of the authoress, and though I have read her tales over and over again, I could not even attempt to describe the plot, or the succession of the incidents, of a single one of her novels. I always come to them as to some thing new. This is, I think, a high tribute to their merits, though it might not seem so ; but it shows that there is such a vast amount of thought and suggestion in every page, and the details are so minute and numerous, that they baffle or confuse the memory.

There are the same possibilities of reperusal in the case of Scott, where also the entertainment is perpetually renewed. For this, however, a different reason may perhaps be found. In the instance of a well-marked spontaneous character in real life, we find a perpetual novelty ; and Scott's characters are so fresh and natural—though it seems somewhat *banal* to give him such praise—that on every perusal something new is suggested, in addition to the actual traits set down. Our own thoughts and imagination keep supplying touches which are implied by, though not actually found in, the sketch itself.*

* A very curious application of the 'up to date' principle has been seen in these latter days, in the shape of an edition

The whims and crotchets of the book-fancier are often fantastic hobbies which cannot be seriously defended. I, however, indulge myself in one which, it seems to me, gives a distinctly additional attraction to the perusal of these wonderful stories; and that is, the reading of them in the original editions. It is something to take down the original issue of 'Waverley' or 'Guy Mannering,' in its three rather lean volumes, printed somewhat roughly, and on coarse paper. There is an antique tone about them that harmonizes well with the matter; you can imagine just such a copy to have been in the hands of the genial author himself. Some of the subsequent editions are certainly enticing—witness the large crown octavo series—tall, stately tomes, bound it may be in old Russia, with fine large type and paper, and a delicate steel plate on the title-page. There is something ennobling in reading volumes such as these. Then there is the brilliant little pocket edition, exquisitely printed—in the blackest type—elegantly 'got up,' with gilt edges and a

of the immortal novelist's stories 'with an introduction.' It is odd to think of the Wizard of the North—second only to Shakespeare in character-drawing—being 'introduced,' or needing any introduction to readers!

'stamped' binding. There is also an old familiar friend, the 'Author's Favourite Edition,' in forty-eight volumes, in its red glazed cloth binding—a most attractive series. There must have been excellent work and material in those days, for 'tis some 'sixty years since' the edition appeared. An intelligent bookseller, showing me a set, remarked how unvaryingly popular it was; and this he traced to early associations—it being so familiar to us in childhood, when it was read out perhaps of a winter's evening by the head of the family. With these were usually issued the poetical works, making a very 'long' but interesting set of some eighty or ninety volumes. The plates were really exquisite, and as appropriate as are those of 'Phiz' to Dickens's stories. Beside these, the modern attempts are feeble and inexpressive. It is no wonder that they seem as 'heartless' as the cheap issue of Burton's 'Anatomy' did to Elia. But apart from this, they have a rather mean and scrubby air. Even the Abbotsford Edition, which fetches a great price, is unsatisfying.

At these midnight hours there is an irresistible temptation to 'discursive' or rambling reading: old forgotten subjects, old essays and biographies,

and travels, as I said before, are then found very welcome. With this view, I have often bought for a song, as it is called, some vast load of volumes, which have furnished enjoyment for many a winter's night. I once purchased for a couple of pounds two long 'sets' of the *Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews* from the very beginning, which offered an astonishing variety of subjects. But the most delightful and satisfactory of all my investments in this wholesale way was a complete set of that work, so dear to boyhood, called 'Constable's Miscellany,' in seventy or eighty volumes. This, which was directed, or advised upon, by Sir Walter himself, contains an admirable selection of the most entertaining travels, biographies, histories, etc., all of standard merit, and furnishes most delightful reading. And here, especially, I find what I have before mentioned, the immeasurable superiority in style to our modern efforts—the clear, limpid, unaffected narrative, and the dealing with essential facts only. There is also a collection—little known—of all the most remarkable autobiographies, which, as may be conceived, has extraordinary interest. How delightful, too, the older series of travels, mostly in huge quartos—Dr.

Clarke's, the Arctic navigators', such as Sir John Ross's, Cook's voyages, 'The World Displayed'! These can be 'picked up'—if the phrase can apply to such bulky matter—for a few shillings; in fact, they are accounted worthless by the bookdealer. In those days people were eager to have these long sets of everything: say the British poets—in nigh a hundred volumes — British essayists, British novelists, British dramatists. Now we are for the other extreme, and want 'compendiums' of everything.

We have, moreover, an idea that these old-fashioned books are out of date, in manner as well as in matter, and tedious reading generally. As one who has read a vast deal of this superannuated literature, I can say that the older books are more entertaining, contain more in the way of thought and facts, than modern works. In these there is a sort of affectation, a wealth of phrases intended to disguise a poverty of thought —a sort of hastiness and glibness which can be traced to the overpowering influence of the newspaper, and the 'day-to-day' fashion of looking at things. By 'affectation' I mean that perpetual self-consciousness of the writer and his 'views'

always interposed between the subject-matter and the reader. There is also, particularly in the case of travels, a laborious minuteness of treatment, an elaboration of journalistic methods, which, however praiseworthy, furnish only the materials for a book.

No better specimen of this system could be found than the much-praised account of the Crimean War, by Mr. Kinglake, the painstaking result of over twenty years' labour. The method of this monumental book was radically false. For not only was every battle described, but every skirmish and incident in the battle, with the achievements of every regiment and the doings of every officer in that regiment. It is obvious that this is dealing with a subject on a wrong scale. These details, however interesting when treated separately, do not belong to the general scheme, which should be simply to record the movements of the two opposing armies. On such a system it would be possible to fill volumes with the account of every important incident in social life, for to details there is no end.

We have but to turn to Napier's clear and logical account of the Peninsular War, where only what is essential is recorded, to learn the

true method of dealing with such subjects. Indeed, a comparison between these two books would be the best possible illustration of what I have said as to the superior interest of the older books. There is a kind of classical tone about Napier's book, a fine dignity, as though the writer were indifferent to the effect he produced, and simply wished to give a clear, full, and satisfactory narrative of what he knew. Kinglake, on the other hand, seems to be eager to produce effect; to work up his scenes in a dramatic way; to fill his page with heterogeneous details. The eye is distracted by the crowd of insignificant movements, and can scarcely follow or make out the progress of the main operations.

During these later years there has grown up a sort of fashion of *reclame*, or self-advertisement, which is often carried to a ludicrous extent. Lord Melbourne was once asked whether, as he had been so long dispenser of the favours of the Crown, he did not consider that, on the whole, mankind was venal: 'No,' he replied, 'but d——d vain.' Considering their methods, this cynical criticism might be fairly applied to the literary world of our day. It seems customary, when

a book is about to be written, to issue an anticipatory proclamation, announcing all the merits of the coming production—what Mr. —— proposes to do, what great things he is certain to do, vaunting the extraordinary qualifications, materials, etc., he is bringing to his task. This seems rather odd, and people naturally wonder how such interest can be excited, not by what has been done, but by what is only going to be done. It will be found, however, almost invariably, that Mr. —— owes this attention to his being, as it is called, 'on the press,' or that he is connected with the press; or it may be what the French call a 'communication' of his own, which his friends insert as a matter of course.

Recently I noticed an announcement of this kind in reference to a 'forthcoming biography,' the correct phrase: 'Mr. —— is *engaged* upon a life of ——, from papers which have been placed at his disposal by, etc. Mr. —— intends to give *special prominence* to the writings (of the subject), quoting the opinions of ——, and many of his contemporaries, and also, *if possible*, those of competent critics of the present day.'

This quoting of contemporary opinions, it will

be seen, is put forward as a sort of striking novelty, though it is the almost invariable practice with biographical writers. The 'if possible' is especially curious, as the criticisms of modern writers are accessible enough. With these advantages a 'standard life may now be *hoped for*.'

In other journals we find the same encouraging announcements, a little varied in form: 'Mr. —— has had all the carefully preserved papers, etc., placed at his disposal. He *purposes* using this unpublished material to expand his former "Life," which has long been out of print.'

Equally ridiculous is it to read, as a statement 'of great pith and moment' for all whom it may concern—that is, for nobody—that 'Mrs. —— will contribute to the forthcoming number of the —— a paper on "Famous Women at their Work." Mrs. —— has long been engaged in collecting materials for this interesting subject'; or, 'We understand that Mr. W. H. Thacker is the author of the paper on "Forward Politics" in the new number of the —— *Review*.'

All this forms part of the modern system of *log-rolling*, a happy, expressive term, which we owe to the Americans. Log-rolling, in a certain

measure, must be with us always ; it is, perhaps, another word for good nature and toleration. In social transactions we take a partial or indulgent view of all that is done by friends or acquaintances. In the matter of literary criticism, if a man were to deal with his friend's play or novel with strict judicial severity, it would be an offence.

A curious development of later days are the newer monthly reviews, issued in imitation of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which have taken strong hold of the public. The first of these was *The Fortnightly*, projected by my old friends and publishers, Chapman and Hall, and for a short time actually issued every fortnight. That brilliant man, George Henry Lewes, had the first direction of it, and contrived by his own contributions, and the thoughtful character of others which he inspired, to give it a distinct *cachet*. All this was a complete novelty. The strain of the fortnightly issue was soon found to be excessive, nor did it suit the traditions of 'the trade,' which has its regular 'magazine day.' So it was speedily given up. Lewes himself used to do most of the reviews, and set the example of signing his name, at

that time a startling innovation, and borrowed from the French.

Here, again, is suggested another interesting question, which M. Zola has so lately treated, whether there is anything gained by the custom. None, I should say, when the 'smaller fry' sign; while the ceaseless 'popping up' in all directions of the more important names leaves a sense of monotony or fatigue. The value of the signed article seems to me just this: A person is known to have made one or two subjects his special study; or his life has been bound up with them. Their treatment, therefore, acquires a distinct value when it is publicly known that so competent an authority has treated them. They are his views, and are therefore of interest. But now, so general has the practice become, it is assumed that the mere signature of some notable writer, who is ready to treat almost any subject, must be a guarantee of the value of the treatment. This, it will be seen, does not at all follow. The writer, finding that his mere name is of value, naturally casts about him for the most convenient subject, and writes because he wishes to write. Except for the mere mechanical treatment, which may be somewhat

better than that of a writer without reputation, his production may be worth little or no attention.*

There is this further objection, too, to the system, that it has led to an extravagantly *personal* or egotistical tone, and the writer is, perforce, led into an apparently conceited exhibition of his own opinions. Even his phrases take this shape, and there is a constant utterance of personal things. Every writer, too, of this

* Mr. Sala has shown, I think, very clearly, what should be the limit of anonymous writing: 'To my mind, it would be simply impossible to maintain the influence and dignity of the English daily press without the preservation, to a very large extent, of anonymity. Let the dramatic, the artistic, the musical, and the literary critics sign their names to their articles by all means; but political or social leading articles, with the writers' names attached thereto, would have, in my humble opinion, no kind of power or weight. I speak feelingly in the matter, since I must have written by this time about 10,000 anonymous leading articles. I will for the nonce assume that my name is Jones, or Smith, or Tomkins. Who am I—Tomkins, or Smith, or Jones—that I should lift up my voice in the *Daily Thunderer* or the *Morning Glory* and solemnly denounce the unscrupulous statesman, the arrogant prelate, the bloated plutocrat, the fraudulent financier, or the unjust judge? Who am I that I should authoritatively advocate, or as authoritatively oppose, any important measure that is before the country? To give force and direction to the sword of the pen which a journalist wields, he must have the benefit of the editorial "we."

kind is inclined to controversy, and is allowed to deal with others according to his particular fashion. Excessive vanity is really one of the 'notes' of the times, and makes our periodical literature tedious and uninteresting. Who cares to know what an obscure Mr. A. thinks of a Mr. B. who is more obscure still, or what mistakes the latter has made in judging the opinions of Mr. A.? 'A plague on *all* your houses!'

And naturally the smaller fry, given this fine opportunity, ape the tone of their betters; and the inferior Mr. A. is as sarcastic and smart on the opinions of the inferior Mr. B. as the superior Mr. C. It is becoming well-nigh intolerable. Whether such lucubrations as these be signed or not surely cannot matter. And yet, indeed, it does, because the signature lends a fictitious importance to matter which has none of its own.

The astonishing extent to which these personal publications have been developed is shown by the long range of serials found on the tables of clubs, where we have the *Contemporary*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the *National Review*, the *New Review*, and others; while as for the magazines, they are almost interminable. But everywhere everything

is signed. It may be assumed that these written 'talks,' or soliloquies, are acceptable, and that there is a demand for them, yet we may doubt if these things are really *read*. They are written very much after the fashion of a newspaper—only to be read in the same superficial way. The subjects appeal to the eye rather than to the intellect. They are contrived to excite a sort of languid surprise—to startle, if possible. The shillings and sixpences are parted with freely at that sort of holiday moment when one is undertaking a railway journey, and when the gaudy wares displayed upon the bookstalls appeal invitingly. Railway reading is a very special sort of reading, and needs special wares.*

* This happy, unconsciously satirical remark of the late Cardinal Newman's, as truthful as it is delightful, always seems to convey an appreciation of the real value of our ephemeral literature. *Macmillan's Magazine* had been quoted to him, as though the name alone carried weighty authority, when he with humility confessed that '*it conveyed no manner of idea to his mind*.'

CHAPTER V.

LECTURING.

The taste for giving and hearing lectures is now somewhat flagging in America, but is becoming stronger in England. Many literary, or, at least, 'writing' men—they are not exactly the same thing—are tempted to come forth and exhibit themselves on the platform, thus hoping to make a substantial addition to their possibly meagre receipts. Naturally, there is a sort of eagerness to see in the flesh and in his evening 'habit as he lived' the mysterious personage who has actually written books, followed, perhaps, by a feeling of surprise or disappointment at finding him, after all, so like other common prosaic folk.

There are plenty of 'lecture-agencies' to 'bring lecturer and audience into happy communication,' *i.e.*, arrange for the exhibition, and who, as the season draws on, send round to the 'literary

institutes' of the country the candidate's programme, with his intended subjects. Ten, twelve, or twenty guineas is the usual remuneration for an average lecture by a person 'with a name,' and the agent is solaced with his ten per cent. Lecturers of greater repute obtain larger fees. Each agent draws up his 'list' of lecturers, some thirty in number, which is sent round to all the 'institutes,' 'polytechnics,' and other societies over the kingdom.

There is a surprising number of these places, and some, like the Birmingham and Midland Institute, or the Edinburgh Academic Association, have an almost metropolitan standing, and are addressed by very important personages indeed. Often these temples, like that at Hull, are of a stately architectural kind, the theatre spacious, and the audiences large and eager. The judicious lecturer will take care to have printed a sort of programme of his own performances, of his merits and claims to attention, drawn up as modestly as is consistent with clearness, which his equally judicious agent will forward to the country societies for their guidance.

Some of the most favourite and regular lecturers are the naturalist, Dr. Dallinger; Mr. Du

Maurier, with his sketches and *Punch* recollections; Mr. Harry Furniss, and his Parliamentary caricatures; Mr. Henry Blackburn, of the 'Academy Notes,' who appears all over the kingdom; Mr. Fagan, of the British Museum, who a year or two ago had extraordinary success in America, and brought home a large sum of money; Mr. Churton Collins; Sir Robert Ball, the accomplished astronomer, who has the easy fluency of his countrymen, and is highly popular in consequence; Mrs. Besant; Mr. Gosse; Sir James Crichton Browne; the Rev. Mr. Haweis, who is in much demand on 'Music,' 'Bells,' and kindred subjects; the French Max O'Rell; Captain Reade; Mr. Frederic Villiers, the war correspondent; Dr. Andrew Wilson, and many more. Some are good, more bad, some colourless and indifferent; but all will be listened to if they have anything to say.

The writing-man, by the very nature of his calling, is given to reserved and delicate communion with his pen and with his manuscript. All is wrought in the quiet secrecy of the study. To be thrust forward of a sudden on the gaze of a thousand fellow-creatures, the fierce light of the gas beating on him, his voice having to travel

round to the end of, say, a vast drill-hall—this becomes a violent wrench, a serious strain and trial, which only the most stalwart can pass through. It, however, brings him 'in touch,' as it were, with the rude realities of life, opens his view, and becomes a beneficial process, supplying, as Boswell calls it, 'bark and steel for the mind.'

A rather serious probation in this way is the special journey to some far-off Northern hitherto unknown and unvisited spot. You find yourself, on some gloomy winter's evening, set down suddenly, say, in Newcastle or Sheffield. You pass through the grim streets, all flaring with gas, the great chimneys and factories looming out above, the workpeople hurrying past, and you have to think, somewhat dismally, perhaps, that within an hour or two you, the solitary unfriended stranger, having never seen a soul in the place before, will be standing on a platform in the huge hall, with a crowd of five or six hundred faces, or it may be a thousand, before you, who will listen with a sort of distrustful curiosity, on the look-out, perhaps, for something that may raise a laugh.

A rather solemn moment is the waiting in that 'lethal chamber,' the ante-room, and the being

introduced to various grave gentlemen—the local doctor, local banker, etc. (they introduce each other gravely)—and carrying on a forced conversation with affected ease and jocularity. At last the moment arrives. Then the procession emerges, the victim last, who is greeted in a tranquil, indifferent way.

The lecturer in his visits to the provinces has often many pleasantly festive incidents to look back to. There is the novelty of the town, itself unfamiliar; the friendly attentions of the leading personages, the general *chaperonage*. It becomes a sort of holiday jaunt. At times, the president of the society will invite the coming lecturer to stay at his house, and if he has some sort of reputation, there will be a little gala dinner got up in his honour.

The busy flourishing city of Hull has a pleasantly old-fashioned tone, and its 'Institute' is a large stately edifice in a fine open space. There is a cordiality and friendliness in the treatment of the stranger, and there is a pride in doing the honours of the old town.

The question will suggest itself, Is there much profit in this system of communicating knowledge? Where the lecturer is master of his

subject, and has made it a special study, and can tell much that is not to be found in books, it is a very useful and interesting mode of teaching. The lecturer is telling what he knows and has experienced. The personality of the performer enters largely into the exhibition. Experience joined to knowledge is assuredly the foundation for good lecturing. But anything founded on mere 'book-learning' should be left outside his lecture-room.

Lecturing supplies a very wholesome kind of discipline and training. It is a real trial, for a person unused to publicity, to come forth and stand in an immense hall before a crowd of many hundred persons, who, often indifferent, sometimes hostile, have taken the trouble to come and listen, and therefore expect to hear something that shall be worth their while. The lecturer must be cool, collected, and vigilant; prepared to take stock of the tone and temper of his hearers, to make changes on the instant in the scheme of his discourse, to shorten or compress as he finds the sands running out, to avoid being too serious and ponderous, and yet not flippant and jocose.

Nothing is more curious than the different com-

plexions of audiences, some being cold and even distrustful, others friendly, cordial, and good-natured to a degree, relishing everything that is said. But the skilled lecturer soon learns to shape his audience to the tone and temper that he desires. Audiences, too, are often rather tried by the visits of pundits, 'dungeons of learning,' but inexperienced in the craft, and very pedantic folk.

'Illustrated by limelight slides' is an announcement often made to allure the crowd. There is a sort of attraction in these views, though the system is rather overdone. Really fine pictures carefully studied and prepared will always be welcomed with favour. Coloured ones are not so effective as brilliant photographs, owing to the repetition of the same tints.

The lecturer, as he enters, will see the great white screen behind him, and far away in the midst the great lantern with its fierce glaring eye ready levelled, the operator standing by his piece like an artilleryman. The shaded lantern which lights the lecturer's notes has a small piece of red glass let in, which, as it is covered or uncovered, gives the signal to the distant operator to make his changes.

Lecturers on art subjects, such as Mr. Henry Blackburn, have a large and valuable store of 'slides,' photographs of original drawings which are interesting and instructive. A small sketch, two or three inches square, can be projected on an enormous scale on the screen.

One of the most popular lecturers in the 'slide' direction is the Rev. Dr. Dallinger, F.R.S., aforesaid, whose learned and entertaining account of the doings and habits of spiders has been heard all over the kingdom, and is set off by a large number of well-coloured 'pictures.'

The topographical lecture — of course, with abundant 'lime-light effects'—seems in favour, and in this point of view Dickens and his life and wanderings seem to have been made a special study — 'The Homes and Haunts of Charles Dickens,' elaborately set out, with Gadshill, the Leather Bottle, Rochester, and the various places he 'haunted.' The series ends, we may be sure, with a view of 'the grave in Westminster Abbey,' and some solemnly pathetic reflections.

In London there are a large number of institutions where lectures are given, and they would seem to be a popular form of entertainment. At

the top of Albemarle Street is an imposing many-columned building—the Royal Institution—very stately and palatial, in whose hall Faraday, its greatest glory, stands in marble. Here are given afternoon lectures on scientific subjects, and, during the season, a more showy gala performance on Friday nights. These latter have quite a festive character, owing to the crowds of ladies in evening-dress and opera-cloaks. It is expected that, if scientific matters are dealt with, it shall be in a popular showy fashion, so as to be understanded of so airy and promiscuous an audience.

In my early days of lecturing I had accepted with a light heart and sense of anticipatory enjoyment the offer made me by the Royal Institution that I should lecture before them. It seemed a welcome compliment. The subject was 'The Art of Acting,' on which I had something to say; but as the night drew near the rashness of making a *coup d'essai* in such a place began to force itself on me. I was 'unaccustomed to public speaking,' and it is a curious fact that the practice of abundant writing is antagonistic to free and fluent speaking. Thinking in your chair

seems to destroy the power of thinking on your legs. Yet to mere reading from a paper, which is a safe and secure process, I could not reconcile myself. A read lecture is, after all, a weary, uninteresting business. How disheartening and monotonous to see some worthy old professor, spectacles on nose, open his MS. book and read on and on, as though it were a 'service'!

Some, however, have an art of reading with spirit, lifting their eyes from the paper after they have secured attention; and a thoughtful audience, where the matter is original, will generally prefer a read lecture. Still, there is something really dramatic in addressing an audience, in securing and riveting their attention; and I was determined, at all risks, even at that of a breakdown, not to read. At all hazards I would trust to the inspiration of the moment. But, as I said, there are situations which induce an original sort of agony—in fact, the very worst quarter of an hour that we could imagine.

It was when turning into Albemarle Street in a hansom cab, and finding progress checked by a line of carriages, police marshalling, etc., lights

flaring, a broad awning stretching from the door over the pavement, fair dames descending and pouring in, that there came the sudden chilling thought, 'All this is for *you*—these carriages, police, the fair, all, have come to hear you and your faltering accents!'

I repeat, that is a rather trying moment. Then the spacious illuminated hall, the crowd of opera-cloaks hurrying upstairs, the handsome libraries, the ante-rooms, and the hum of voices from the already crowded theatre. Then the introduction to the committee and 'the chairman of the night,' who is courteously sure that 'they will have a treat,' with the ghastly attempts at general easy conversation.

At last the hour strikes, the procession is formed, and the chairman leads the way to the scaffold. Some faint applause from unseen quarters greets the chairman, and then the lecturer sees of a sudden the vast lighted hall and the crowded amphitheatre. He is encouraged by applause, by the secretary's assurance, 'A most good-natured audience,' and, once launched on his course, finds the ordeal not so terrible; all difficulties vanish, the inspiration of the moment *does* stand to him. The audience is, in truth, a

charming one, good-natured to excess, and welcomes the slightest flutter of a jest.

London audiences are very distinct in their character, just like individuals. A lecture at the Society of Arts has, for instance, features of its own. The theatre is a very stately chamber, practically open to the public, and the nervous lecturer's eye will wander uneasily to Barry's fine panoramic pictures that run round the walls. The real interest of the night generally centres in the discussion that follows the lecture, in which any stranger can take part. Sometimes there are regular 'field fights,' as in the case of that battle on railway-brakes, Sir F. Bramwell in the chair, when the leading inventors hotly debated their systems. One feels quite at home here, as the audiences are good-natured rather than indifferent.

A flight across London to the City, to Finsbury Circus, and we stand before the London Institution—an imposing granite building, architectural and almost spacious in its halls and theatre. Nothing is more curious than the different tone of the various districts of the great Metropolis, each of which has a flavour as if in different towns. Here the vast amphi-

theatre holds from eight hundred to a thousand persons, and seems on every occasion to be crowded. The honest burgesses crowd in from the outer suburbs by rail and bus, eager for information. They are a well-dressed, comfortable, and intelligent community, responsive to anything like an animated appeal; and a little vivacity or dramatic feeling, which contrasts with the ordinary humdrum they suffer from, is joyfully welcomed. Everyone is glad, or ought to be glad, to present himself before such a company, and accordingly they have 'the pick,' as it is called, of the lecturing band.

It is a curiously original and piquant sensation to find one's self emerging on the platform of a huge Dissenting chapel, with galleries running round, in far-off Westbourne Park, close to Whiteley-land. This tabernacle belongs to Dr. Clifford, who allows it to be used for these mundane purposes. The chapel holds a vast audience, chiefly composed of the Doctor's followers, with a good many of the great 'Provider's' young men—a smartly critical class, who are ominously unrestrained in the expression of their opinions. They are eager in the pursuit of knowledge, and critical withal; they wish for a good

article, and, in advertisement phrase, they 'see that they get it.' Favourite lecturers come here again and again, the audience growing accustomed to their ways.

One of the most interesting audiences for the lecturer is that of the Working Men's College, Great Ormond Street. Here is a good old Georgian house, with a fine stretch of garden behind. At the bottom is the spacious and cosy theatre, generally well crowded. Nothing can be more cordial or sympathetic than these honest folk; their intelligence, moreover, is of a very high order. They relish the most abstruse themes, and will follow with extraordinary interest disquisitions by Sir John Lubbock or the late Lord Justice Bowen on education, statistics, and other deep questions. Not long since, Mr. Churton Collins read a paper on 'Shakespeare's Religion,' which was followed with absorbed interest. Personally, I delight in being with them, and have gone to them again and again.

There is a society for 'relieving the tedium of Sunday evenings,' as it might be called, which appeals to a yet lower stratum by the aid of entertaining lectures, music, etc. These are given in huge places, such as the drill-halls,

'The Horns' at Kennington, etc. It is rather a trial to come before these vast miscellaneous and heterogeneous gatherings, and it requires skill and experience to know what topics will exactly suit. It is a strain on the voice, too, to make your accents reach the far-off galleries; but one who has passed successfully through this ordeal will readily face any kind of audience with comparative tranquillity. They are somewhat difficult to keep in hand, and at any flagging of the interest are inclined to break out into a semi-ironical applause, which is disturbing. The lecturer who pauses to consult his papers or look for his place is likely enough to be thus 'encouraged' to proceed.

An expedition to one of the remote suburbs of London has a quaint tone of old fashion, and of novelty, too. Such flavour has Richmond or Kingston. It is pleasant wandering through the ancient winding streets of the latter place, with its old framed houses; thence emerging on the Market Place, where is the old church and churchyard, with the glimpse of the silvery river beyond. It is odd to think that this little place boasts its Mayor and Corporation, with the mace and other 'baubles.'

Some such night we recall, when there was a pleasant-looking little hall situated in a suburb of this antique town, inviting and brightly lit. There was an air of nature and simplicity in the proceedings, the chair being taken by a placid reverend professor, who, as usual, opened the proceedings with a 'few observations.' The room was an open-roofed, chapel-like place, and the audience a well-dressed and rather 'genteel' one of about three hundred persons. It had the air of a family party, so tolerant and friendly were they all.

After it was over there was pleasant wandering again, in the moonlight, through the old streets, under the shadows of the framed houses, encountering the muffled figures of the late listeners walking cheerfully to their homes. The lecturer will thus often hear some free and loud criticisms of his performance which may do him good. Kingston is pleasant to think of. One scarcely suspects what a country, unsophisticated tone have many of these London suburbs, which are but a few miles away from the great Metropolis.

At Camberwell, in the Peckham Road, is that wonderful suburban institution, the South London

Gallery of Art, so unpretending and yet so effective from its spacious apartments and excellent treasures in paintings and other art objects. It does credit to the exertions of the few who have worked so hard to establish it, notably the excellent Rossiter, and his ally, Miss Oliver. There is a semi-rural, unsophisticated air about it; it rather suggests another delightful gallery which owes its charm to the same rural or countrified tone, that at Dulwich.

There is a welcome surprise in coming on such a place from the fields and dusty highroad, a tone of quiet repose that is inviting and piquant. We do not take half account enough of these impressions which add so considerably to artistic enjoyment. Of course, they are of a delicate kind, and *caviare* to coarser natures; but they are well worth nourishing. Most people assume that the regular official 'sights' are your 'only wear,' but the enjoyment is far greater when you discover things for yourself.

I may be allowed to mention some of the subjects which I have found acceptable to audiences. These are: 'A Day's Tour: a Journey through England, France, and Belgium in

Thirty Hours' (with lantern slides), 'The Art of Acting,' 'The Adam Architecture in London,' 'The First Printed Book' (also with slides), 'Recollections of Dickens and his Friends,' 'Recollections of Actors Old and New.'

CHAPTER VI.

WHIMS AND HUMOURS OF THE WRITING LIFE.

IRISHMEN of the jovial, good-humoured sort show little reverence for each other, and to foster the hilarity of the moment any weapon that 'comes handy,' such as practical joking, hoaxing, or humorous personal satire, is often used. It is often highly entertaining to witness an encounter of this kind between two countrymen.

There is in Dublin a daily paper known as the *Irish Times*. Many years ago, before the rise of the society papers, it boasted a facetious chronicler, signing himself 'Bartolo,' who made humorous comments on local events, gossip, etc. These were much relished. 'Seen Bartolo this week?' 'Uncommonly good Bartolo to-day,' were the regular remarks. There were, of course, replies and controversies when some too piquant bit of gossip had been introduced. In this connec-

tion I remember a rather unusual hoax was once concocted and ingeniously and elaborately carried out, to the mystification of all concerned. One morning, among some other *causerie*, 'Bartolo' quoted what he described as 'a distich sung by the Jacobins in 1745,' the 'distich' being, it seems:

> 'God bless the King,
> God bless the Prince of Wales,
> And God bless—why not?—
> God bless the Pretender,' etc.

This extraordinary version of the toast or song, with that amusing pair of blunders, 'a *distich*' of eight lines, and the 'Jaco*bins* of 1745,' caused much diversion. I was living in London at the time, but, it was given out, had been attracted by these comic mistakes, and had promptly addressed a correction to the paper.

'From quite a host of correspondents,' 'Bartolo' wrote, 'I have received communications respecting the lines beginning with "God bless the King!" and have great pleasure in inserting the following:

> '"Garrick Club, London, W.C.,
> '"*February* 24, 1877.
>
> '"SIR,
>
> '"As a distich in eight lines is a novelty in English literature, permit me to refresh the

memory of Mr. Bartolo, who says, very properly, that he was 'out in '45.' No wonder that his memory should be a little 'out,' if he endeavoured to remember in 1877 'a *distich* sung in 1745.' The following correct version of the famous quatrain, not a distich, will be found in the second edition of my 'Tottenham in his Boots,' 398 (it is not in the previous edition) :

'"'God bless the King—I mean the Faith's Defender;
God bless—no harm in blessing—the Pretender!
Who that Pretender is, and who that King—
God bless us all!—is quite another thing.'

'"The author was John Byrom, of Manchester.

'"Yours,

'"PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A.

'"P.S.—Permit me to add that it was the Jacobites, and not the 'Jacobins,' who sang in 1745."'

It next appeared that I had sent some 'humorous' lines by way of epigram, which were thus introduced :

'Bartolo has great respect for Mr. Percy Fitzgerald. Having dined with him once at the Garrick, some yards off, and found him a jolly good fellow, he feels a right to claim a life-long friendship, and therefore takes it as a personal

insult that P. F. should address such lines as the following to one who has been, and is, so good a friend of his :

'"NOTHING LIKE LEATHER.

P. F. TO BARTOLO.

In vain attempts to brazen out his 'distich,'
Friend Bartolo grows pert and pugilistic ;
Well, be it so, I'll humour him and lick him,
For though my name is 'Percy,' and not 'Kickham,'
He and all those whom lax quotation suits
Had best keep clear of 'Tottenham' and his 'Boots.'
The terror they of every trifling talker,
Who makes a blunder and then cries out '*Walker!*'"

'Garrick Club, London,
'*February* 28, 1877.'

All this, of course, was trivial enough, and is only worth recalling for the ingenious complications which the authors introduced into their hoax, for their next step was to bring forward Mr. Percy Fitzgerald himself to protest against the use made of his name.

'SIR,

'In calling at the Garrick Club a few days ago, after an absence of some weeks, among other letters addressed to me there, I found one with the Dublin postmark. On opening the envelope, you may imagine my surprise to find within a

short note from the editor of the *Irish Times*, with a returned contribution purporting to have been written by me. The editor's note was laconic in the extreme: "Declined with thanks; cannot afford further space to this controversy; 'Bartolo' does not consider your apology satisfactory." Now, as I had not sent any contribution to the *Irish Times*, was not in correspondence with the editor, and did not know who or what "Bartolo" was, except, indeed, for a moment thinking it might be the name of a dog, I was fairly bewildered.

'As far as I can make out this strange affair began thus: Being only an occasional reader of the *Irish Times* until this impudent trick excited my curiosity, I had not noticed that there appears frequently in that paper a gossiping sort of contribution of a very frivolous character signed 'Bartolo.' Who this writer is I know not, but from the few of his lucubrations I have seen, his principal occupation each day seems to be correcting the mistakes he made the day before. However, it is not my object to criticise the literary character of the *Irish Times* or its contributor, but to defend my own; and, therefore, on that head I shall say no more.

'It is scarcely necessary to say that these letters were never written by me, and that I have never published any work with such a preposterous title as "Tottenham in his Boots," though, no doubt, I have briefly alluded to the episode in the history of the Irish Parliament connected with that phrase.

'Because he "dined once at the Garrick—some yards off—with Mr. Percy Fitzgerald," a casual, though, as he admits, somewhat distant, partaking of salt with me at that hospitable club, how can he be entitled "to claim a life-long friendship" with me? Unfortunately for me, I cannot at present reciprocate the friendship very warmly, for unhappily I do not know even the name of my "life-long friend," and have failed altogether to recall to my memory the circumstance he alludes to.

'However, I offer to my life-long friend the following explicit apology. The Roman tongue, as he says himself in his own beautiful and classic Latinity, is not a "terra incognito" to the learned "Bartolo," and therefore I give it in that language. The dinner at the Garrick I also remember but too distinctly. In fact, a ballad on the subject will appear in the new and *last* edition of "Totten-

ham and his Boots." I, however, present it in the first place to the *Irish Times*, reserving, however, at the same time, all rights.

'Perci Gerardi Filii,
Ad Bartolum—Clarum et Venerabile Nomen—
Pro Joco Suo,
Apologia.
Londini, V. Non. Mart.,
MD.CCC.LXXVII.

'"GORGING AT THE GARRICK.

I remember, I remember, as the dishes passed me by,
That evening in December when my 'Bartolo' was by.
Now away at some short distance sat 'Bartolo' in state,
In vain was all resistance, for of every dish he ate;
He eyed each silver cover, and he oped each mighty jaw,
When partridge, duck, and plover soon vanished in his maw.
I felt about to famish, 'Aroint thee, witch, aroint!'
For though late a little Lambish I was then 'quite out of joint,'
As Hamlet says, when speaking of the *Times* (of course our own),
So, my supper elsewhere seeking, I vanished with a groan,
First taking, as a herald, a glass of rosy wine,
For, alas! though a Fitzgerald, I was then no *Geraldine!*
I flew to Covent Garden, at Evans' to sup,
When to Dickens' 'Dolly Varden' I drained a flowing cup,
In remembrance of each supper, where we jolly fellows met:
There were Tennyson and Tupper, and others of that set;
'Thank God! I am at last here,' I cried in my delight;
'No longer need I fast here, I'm safe at least to-night.'

'"P. F."

'In conclusion, sir, permit me to apologize for the length of this exposure of an impudent literary fraud, and to express a hope that other respectable Irish journals will, by copying the foregoing, assist me in detecting the delinquent. My friend, Edmund Yeates (*sic*), intends devoting a special article to it in the *World*.

'I am, sir,

'Yours faithfully,

'PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A.'

The concocters of the business must have roared with enjoyment when they found 'Bartolo' gravely refuting these statements. He wrote:

'As, in common with yourself, I was attacked this morning in a lengthy communication, signed "Percy Fitzgerald, M.A.," I ask you to insert the following vindication, addressed by me to the editor of the *Freeman's Journal*.—Yours faithfully, BARTOLO.

'"SIR,

'"In to-day's *Freeman* there appears a communication signed 'Percy Fitzgerald, M.A.,' and purporting to be from the pen of the well-known writer of that name, in which Bartolo is

freely handled. As you have seen fit to devote a column and a quarter to that letter, I claim from you, in the interests of fair play, the fourth of that space in which to reply.

'"1. Your correspondent writes that on calling at the Garrick Club a few days ago, he found addressed to him a 'short note from the editor of the *Irish Times*, with a returned contribution, purporting to have been written by me. The editor's note was laconic in the extreme: "Declined with thanks: cannot afford further space to this controversy. 'Bartolo' does not consider your apology satisfactory."' *To this my answer is that such a note was never written, and consequently never sent.*

'"2. The 'declined contributions' which you published in the concluding part of the letter were never returned to either the real or the assumed Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, but were carefully consigned to the editor's private desk, for the very sufficient reason that, having in his possession a letter from the real Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, he at once detected that the special contribution just referred to, and published in this morning's *Freeman* as real, was a forgery."'

This effusion made the situation bewildering,

for, as I said, if the disclaimed letter were a hoax, so, it would be insisted, was the disclaimer. About this time it was that I first heard of the business, and, though more amused than annoyed, I thought of writing to the paper to set the matter right. But who was to guarantee that such a protest would be accepted as genuine? It would but add to the confusion. How was the editor to know that it came from the real Simon Pure? However, I contrived to reach him with a communication which should bear the marks of genuineness, and an authoritative statement appeared in the paper. A leader also took the incident for its text, and set out indignantly the disloyal behaviour of the rival journal. I have described the whole here, certain that it will be heartily appreciated by all amateur hoaxers of the school of Theodore Hook.

It is not commonly supposed that the officials in the public offices are diligent students of the literature of the day, not for mere instruction or amusement, but in the interests of 'the department.' I was once destined, however, to have rather an awkward experience that such is the case. Yet the incident had such a quaint, comedy flavour, that I was all but repaid by the entertainment furnished. It fell out in this way. I had

written a book somewhat autobiographical, called 'Recreations of a Literary Man,' an account of methods of writing, with recollections of Dickens and others, an interesting subject, treated, if I may be permitted to say so, in an unaffected way. This work had the result of attracting sympathetic letters from a great number of readers, with expressions of interest, and even of regard. The subject was no doubt a pleasing one, but I could not resist the impression that the book, of which there were two editions, had made me many friends. One portion, which dealt with the various ways of beginning to write, and 'getting a start,' as it is called, a most difficult matter now, was reprinted separately in America as a sort of 'Writer's *Vade Mecum*.'

It happened, however, that in another portion of the book I had given some details about literary profits, adding some as to the money that was made. Somewhat complacently I supplied my own profits during the earlier years when I began to write. This was, I suppose, *pour encourager les autres*. After some years, I received a communication from the District Income-Tax Collector, announcing that he had been directed to enclose me a formal document and demand from

headquarters at Somerset House. It was to this effect. They understood that I had published a book, 'containing the following passages'; and a couple of pages, with the account of the profits, etc., were transcribed in full. (It had an odd effect, reading these familiar and somewhat jocose phrases, set out solemnly on the official forms, and transcribed by the official scribes on the familiar blue paper). They had turned back to all my income-tax returns, but could find no record of the 'tax' having ever been paid on those profits. This mixture of 'Schedule D' with the light, irresponsible utterances of a gossiping chronicle had something very *bizarre* about it.

It happened that there was some truth in the statement, for, owing to my residing 'out of the jurisdiction,' no 'forms' had been sent, and no application was made. The duties had not been paid for several years. After some time, however, I received the forms, and they were regularly filled up and the amount discharged. Though, I believe, no claim can be made after two years, it seemed a sort of case of conscience. So I entered into negotiations, and a substantial sum was paid and accepted; but, as I said, there was

no legal power to enforce such a claim. I am assured that the system is for the young fellows of the office to make these inquisitions on their own account, and that in the course of their reading and otherwise they often discover clues of this kind, to the astonishment and annoyance of the taxpayer. My ingenious young friend had been thus particularly successful, and, I believe, he and his fellows are encouraged to make further efforts by receiving a percentage on the amount recovered.

A curious situation comes back upon me now, which is associated with a printing office. Once a 'heavy' book of mine was being printed at the Crystal Palace Press, by 'Charles Dickens and Evans,' and there was some object in getting it 'out' with all speed. I remember being told in compositor's language that there were 'twenty-five men *on me*.' When about three-fourths of the book had been set up it was found that there had been some miscalculation in the 'cast off,' and that there was nearly half a volume more of 'copy' than was required. I rushed down to the Palace, and, entering the sacred precincts of the 'chapel,' proposed carrying away the copy with a view of sitting up that night and compressing it. The

foreman, however, pointed to the fact of the twenty and odd men 'on me'; the machinery, therefore, was not to be interrupted for a moment. As I stood, I noticed that these men were coming up rapidly every moment and helping themselves to sheets of copy from a heap beside me, which I recognised as my own. Every moment it was diminishing. In despair, I looked on at the insatiable monsters swallowing their prey. It was impossible to overtake or keep up with them. The only thing was to sit down, there and then, and, starting a little in advance, race against them all. Even as I compressed and 'cut out' desperately, they were hard on my traces, almost snatching the leaves from my hands. At last, however, the day came to an end, and work stopped. I was enabled to carry off the substantial bulk of what was left, to be worked at through the night, but on the strict understanding that it was to be delivered betimes on the following morning before the work began.*

* Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the book was very successful, and every copy was subscribed for on the day of publication.

Everything connected with printing has been so improved and methodized, that I have often felt surprised that nothing has been done to simplify the packing-up of proofs despatched

I remember yet another instance of the odd things that occur in the literary or writing life. I had been in Rome, and writing an account of my adventures there, which came out week by

by the post. This, as all authors know, is done in a rather clumsy fashion, the sheets of MS. being rolled into a bundle, and a wrapper pasted tightly round them. The author finds extraordinary difficulty in tearing off this cover, or even in making a beginning to do so: if he use a knife, he may cut his sheets; if he try and tear it off in strips, it is a long and slow process, and he will probably tear the sheets also. This is a trivial matter after all; but as, in the case of a large work, the proofs arrive nearly every day, the process has to be regularly repeated at loss of time and patience.

A further objection is, that by this treatment the sheets are rolled up and crumpled, and do not present the smooth, book-like surface which is necessary for comfortable revision. The late Mr. Forster, who was ever neat and practical in his methods, when an important work of his own was passing through the press, had two sets of stiff cardboard covers prepared, with strings; in these the sheets were placed and transmitted through the post, thus arriving quite fresh and smooth. On one was the printed address of the printers, on the other his own. They thus travelled backwards and forwards until their duty was finished. The fascination of proofs is almost irresistible, for there is something perpetually novel in seeing your own thoughts, for the first time, in the dress of print. It is like looking at yourself in the glass. Sometimes at dinner, when the post would be brought in, I have seen my friend's eye settle on the packet with a paternal interest; he would presently open it, and half mechanically take stolen glances to see how the thing looked. Yet he was a veteran writer.

week in Mr. Dickens's journal. These excited comment, and portions were copied into the *Times* and other papers. After my return, I one day cast my eyes on a newspaper, and there read a letter from, I think, a country clergyman, who began by speaking of the state of things at Rome, which was then interesting all the world, saying that he had sent his son to travel and observe, and that this youth had just sent the family home 'this clever picture of Roman life.' Then followed a long passage which I recognised as my own 'thunder,' a word or two being altered here and there. On this I addressed a private letter to the youth, requiring an explanation of the proceeding. In an agony of penitence he wrote an entreating letter begging forbearance. The fact was that 'the governor' had sent him abroad to improve and 'open' his mind, and to give proof that this process was going on, he was to write reports and accounts of what he saw. He could not write—had not time, and did not know how, to describe—so, seeing my account, he thought it would be no harm to copy it, and thus satisfy 'the governor.' He begged humbly for forgiveness—which meant, I suppose, that 'the governor' was not to be informed—and obtained it.

I once made an odd experiment in the way of travel which is associated with an agreeable recollection of almost wild adventure. A day's tour or excursion is a pleasant thing, but it once occurred to me that it would be a new sensation to find how much travel could be compressed into twenty-four or thirty hours, without hurry or inconvenience.

On the evening of a sultry August day, a Thursday, I accordingly set out from Victoria Station, made a journey through England, France, and Belgium, visited about a dozen towns, saw churches, town-halls, belfries, religious ceremonies, even plays, travelled over four hundred miles, and was back at Victoria early on the morning of Saturday, having been away about thirty hours.

Incredible as this may seem, it was a most enjoyable and exciting expedition. But, of course, every step and stage had been carefully planned beforehand, and the 'times' calculated with the utmost nicety. Here is my *orario:*

'At 5 p.m. departed from Victoria, and at 7 I was walking up Dover Cliffs, where I visited the old castle, old churches, town-hall, and other lions. At 8 attended an amusing

elocution contest for a silver challenge-cup, which filled up the hours till 10.

'By 11.30 we were in Calais, and during the hour and more spent there I set off for the town, while the more epicurean travellers were feasting. It was half a mile away, and a most romantic promenade it was at the midnight hour. I wandered about the streets, admired the old town-hall, with its exquisite belfry; heard its most musical chimes jangling at intervals. I found out the old Hall of Staple, built by the English; the old church celebrated by Ruskin; was amused by the grotesque demon lighthouse, which, almost in the town, flashes its revolving light into every window. At 1 o'clock I was back at the station, and found all bustle, and the train ready to start.

'Then came sleep, from which we were roused by a stop. It was 5 a.m. Here I got down to continue my travels, and walked away in the dark towards a Moorish-looking town—Tournay. As I entered, all the bells in the place broke out into a *charivari*. We had passed from France into Belgium. Coming on the great *Place*, I admired the vast cathedral, a wonderful thing. A number of shadowy figures

were crossing the open space and passing into the cathedral. I entered and heard the Mass. It was piquant to see this glimpse of foreign life at such an hour.

'By 7 o'clock I was in the train again, speeding on, and in an hour came to a fortified town—Douai, with ditches, scarps, etc.—an interesting old place. I saw the exquisite belfry, the pride of this part of the world, and wandered into the old cathedral, with its almost comical steeple. Here a *festa* was going on—young ladies in veils, and the Bishop himself preaching to the young ladies. I liked the bassoon and double-bass players in surplices. There was a charming town-hall here with a piquant belfry, old Spanish houses, and the old English College, now a barrack, where the famous Douay Bible was translated.

'I did not depart until 10.8, and made straight for Arras, reached at 10.52. These places are rather unfamiliar, and visited by few. They have a curious air of old-fashion and provinciality. Arras alone is worth journeying from London to see, for it is enclosed within a wall, with exquisite towers and spires rising from within. There are two *Places*, surrounded by

Spanish houses, whose roofs are all "escalloped,' as it is called, and covered colonnades below, which have a singularly original look. The sensible town has bound itself by law never to alter or demolish these buildings.

'By 11.15 I was on the road again, reaching Lille, another great fortified town, by 12.15. This is a handsome, spacious city, doing the heart good, from its fat, opulent air. The old Bourse here was a delightful object. So was the old cathedral, though not the new one, from the designs of "Messrs. Clutton and Burgess, of London." The fine theatre, the town-hall, the glittering shops, and the genial Parisian air, were all novel and interesting. I quitted it with reluctance at 1.55, reflecting how much there was to be seen in tnese French provincial towns.

'By 2.34 p.m. we had halted at Commines, a pretty town, with a piquant, elegant belfry, of which there is an abundance in Belgium and French Flanders. I was amused at the oddity that half the town belonged to France, the other half to Belgium, each with its own station. The famous Philip was, of course, connected with the place.

'At 3 we set off once more, and soon

reached a remarkable old town, which had always seemed to me to belong to romance and novels rather than to actual life — Ypres. I really think the town-hall to be one of the most astonishing monuments in existence— perhaps a wonder of the world for its amazing length, size, and majesty. Yet this once flourishing town was now "dead." I did not meet a dozen people, and I could not find a restaurant or café. Cabs seemed unknown.

'With renewed reluctance, and even sadness, I left this stupendous thing, about 4. At 5.5 I was at Hazebrouck, "a place of bifurcation," as our neighbours choose to call a junction. Here I noted the very elegant spire of the church, which has a celebrity for its graceful shape.

'I set off again at 5.13, making for Bergues, a place which I suspect few have heard of. It was reached at 6.1 p.m. I found it a dainty little fortified town, with moat, towers, pretty gateway, drawbridge, and all complete. You could walk across it in about five minutes, or less. I noted how all the houses were but of two stories, and shrank, as it were, for shelter behind the walls. It is celebrated for a belfry, charming for its originality and piquancy, and most musical. It

was an odd, original, and welcome sensation, walking about a place of this sort, with gates that were shut at a certain hour.

'I departed at 6.57, and came to St. Omer at 8.40—a charming place, embowered in greenery and surrounded by umbrageous plantations. This pretty city I wandered through, and observed the grass literally growing in the streets. In the three hours I was here I saw a great deal that interested me; the wonderful Abbey of St. Bertin, as large as York Minster, and now a ruin—a ruin which is the work of the Revolution, when it was purposely pulled to pieces. There are plenty of decayed English here, who are seeking that *ignis fatuus*, economy.

'At midnight the Paris mail came thundering up, and I was taken in. At 1.14 I was once more at "Calais Maritime," in the midst of a huge crowd, struggling on board the steamer. By 3 I was in the same crowd, struggling to get out of the vessel they had been so eager to enter; and by about 6 I was once more at Charing Cross Station, much tired and more bewildered. For I had seen and observed a quantity of interesting and curious things—bits of life, bits of manners, men, women, and towns

of every pattern. I confess I heartily enjoyed it all—my thirty-six hours' pilgrimage. And this abundant varied entertainment did not cost £4.' Such was my day and a half's tour.

This epitome gives no idea of the charm of this expedition. Many of my epicurean friends have shrugged their shoulders and commiserated my odd taste for such midnight wanderings.*

But to such expeditions the habit of writing gives a zest and flavour that few can realize. Not long since I made a most enjoyable excursion from London 'to explore the course of the New River. This historic and engaging little stream was brought, as the world knows, from its far-off source, the Amwell, in Hertfordshire, by the doughty Sir Hugh Myddleton in the reign of James I. It meanders in the most picturesque way through towns and meadows and private demesnes for some thirty or forty miles. I tracked

* One 'd——d good-natured' cynical friend, indeed, hinted in his paper that the journey might have been made more comfortably *autour de ma chambre*, assisted by Bradshaw's foreign 'Railway Guide' and Baedeker. I have made this journey several times, varying it a little, and have written various accounts of it for the *Daily News*, *St. James's Gazette*, etc. A more detailed account will be found in my little book 'A Day's Tour,' published by Messrs. Chatto. I have also made it the subject of lectures, set off by 'lantern slides.'

it from its 'head,' at Islington, by old Sadlers' Wells Theatre to Stoke Newington, thence on to Enfield and Edmonton, to Cheshunt — to Broxbourne—the Rye House, etc. All these are quaint, old-world places, novel and full of entertainment from their picturesqueness and old associations. Charles Lamb at one time had just such a scheme in his head. When I was preparing some topographical works on the great city—'Picturesque London' and 'London City Suburbs'—I had another season of intense enjoyment, walking over every foot of the ground, making new discoveries every day. No one, indeed, can conceive how much is still to be seen in this London of ours.

Once or twice in our lives, it may be, we find ourselves in some situation where a feeling is produced of a very original kind, such as we have never experienced before; indeed, such as few are likely to experience. I had gone to see a play, one of the innumerable 'first nights' I have attended, and as the piece proceeded—it was called 'The Solicitor'—was startled by hearing the characters talking of one 'Percy Fitzgerald.' That personage presently entered, and the characters addressed him by his name; and

there, in the bill, was to be read the name, as large, or, rather, as suggestive, as life. This was, as I said, a queer experience, and not without discomfort, for there were gathered a crowd of 'first-nighters,' critics, and 'hangers-on' generally, who 'laughed consumedly' every time the name was mentioned.

Where the name was a common one, there would, of course, be nothing surprising in its being introduced on the stage, and no 'John Smith' or 'William Jones' that happened to be in the audience could object or feel astonishment at hearing those names. But this name is rather uncommon, and when, as Lamb puts it, 'the species is almost the genus,' there was obviously something intentional in the proceeding. Mr. Rudyard Kipling, for instance, might naturally in such a case come to the same conclusion.

I now remembered meeting, some months before, my old friend the licenser at one of the picture-shows, when he complained to me in his own natural way of a piece that had been sent to him for his approval, into which, he said, my name had been most unwarrantably introduced. 'A shameful, wanton act,' he continued; 'but I let them know such tricks are not to be played.'

Pleased with his good-natured warmth, which he ever shows where his friends are concerned, I laughed at the notion, and thought no more about the matter, until it was so disagreeably recalled to me just as I have described.

I now laid the matter before him, and he acted with such promptitude that in a day or two the name was withdrawn and another substituted. I received an obsequious apology from the author of the production, protesting that it was all accidental and no offence was intended. I wondered, however, what could have been the object of this singular proceeding; no doubt some gratification of petty feeling.

It is an odd sensation also to find one's self addressed by name from the galleries. On the last night of one of Dickens's readings at the Rotunda, Dublin, that large hall being crammed, I was proceeding leisurely to my seat, or, rather, trying to find it, when a voice came from the galleries in a rich, thick brogue, 'Sit down, Misther *Fitzjarl*, can't ye?'

At one time Miss Florence Marryatt was editor of *London Society*, a highly important magazine then, and in the hands of a great firm of printers, the Messrs. Clowes. In the autumn

of one year it was determined to arrange a goodly and imposing Christmas Number; its direction was entrusted to Mr. Burnand, and he enlisted a number of writers, whose names were well known and in demand. With a view to arrange the matter in council and distribute the parts, Mr. Clowes hospitably invited us all down to a dinner at Greenwich, and a large gathering it was. After the dinner, Burnand gave a description of the machinery he had devised for introducing the stories, and then, in his own lively fashion, sketched the portions he would allot to each.

An amusing discussion followed, some objecting to their characters, others treating the whole thing humorously, in spite of entreaties 'to be serious; *this* was business,' etc. One contributor, I recollect, took it almost too gravely, and suggested a sort of didactic treatment 'with a moral,' which was received with much hilarity. Later, he withdrew in disgust. Among other devices, one of the younger Cruikshanks, who was of the party, was to furnish a richly-coloured cover containing portraits of the party, in character, as it were, with some attribute or guise associated with their story. Something about 'a model theatre' had been allotted to me, and I see myself now—a good

likeness—dressed as a stage bandit with toys, etc.*

Editors of illustrated magazines, by the way, are often brought by their artists pretty fancy sketches of some situation which will make an effective engraving. This it is the practice to give to some skilled tale-writer as a text for a story, the vulgar phrase being to 'write up to it' or down to it, as the case may be. In the case of the *Illustrated News* and other important journals I have done this; nor is it so mechanical a proceeding as might be supposed, for often the picture furnishes inspiration, and a glance at it will supply a whole story.

It is curious what unexpected situations the writing man will find occasionally presented to him. Thus, some years ago, 'The Dramatic Students,' as they were called, an energetic, enthusiastic body of young aspirants, who have since sent some useful recruits to the stage, were giving a dramatic performance at the Olympic, I think. They had selected that quaint old farce of Charles Lamb's, 'Mr. H.,' and knowing that I

* This agreeable old custom of the magazine dinner seems to have wholly 'gone out.' I find among old papers cards of invitation to a *Household Words* and also to a Belgravia dinner.

had published a good deal on Elia, and had edited his works, they invited me to superintend the production—revise the play ; in short, 'get it up.' This would have been a pleasant as well as a novel task, but I was absent from London at the time, and could not undertake it.

I witnessed the performance, however, which was most enjoyable, the players having admirably caught the antique, old-fashioned tone of the piece. Miss Belmore's performance of the heroine was in truth quaint and admirable. Looking on from the stalls was that cultured Elian, the Rev. Alfred Ainger. Lamb's odd and somewhat incoherent work was, as we know, thoroughly damned at Drury Lane, and it was more interesting as a 'curio' than as a dramatic work. It has often occurred to me that an interesting 'triple bill,'* as it is called, could be made out of the theatrical attempts of celebrated men. We might have Tom Moore's 'M.P. ; or, the Blue Stocking,' Dickens's 'Strange Gentleman,' and this 'Mr. H.' of Lamb's.

On another occasion I was 'approached,' as it

* This odious piece of theatrical slang is quite unnecessary : a triple bill is surely a bill tripled, *i.e.*, three bills, not, as is sought to be conveyed, a bill of three items. An amusing dictionary might be made of theatrical slang.

is called, by a society known as the Playgoers' Club, and invited to become their president. This, a curious and rather original society, consisted of what are called 'first-nighters,' who debated in the freest style the claims and merits of plays, authors, and actors. Some of their discussions have been very spirited and amusing, ladies fearlessly taking their part. This society has developed some clever writers—Mr. Zangwill, for instance—who represents what is called the 'new school' of criticism and writing generally. This new school, it seems to me, is but an adaptation of Mark Twain's American methods, the surprise lying in the use of familiar colloquial phrases such as would cause a laugh in conversation. With inferior writers the recipe appears to be to write down 'whatever comes into your head.' I except from this, however, the head of the school, my friend Mr. Jerome, who is a wit of the first water, than whose 'Stage-land' I do not know any happier piece of burlesque. The delightful accuracy and gravity of this performance is most entertaining. Anyone who is not in the least familiar with the stage or its ludicrous conventions must be amused. Part of the art, too, lies in the sympathy and respect with which the subject

is treated. The effect was prodigiously assisted by the sketches furnished by Mr. Partridge, which have a similar 'actuality.'

For all his undoubted talent, Mr. Jerome is a modest, retiring person, and has not at all the air of the professional jester. He conducts his magazine with never-flagging spirit and success. I am aware that the 'Three Men in a Boat' is more popular than the 'Stage-land'; the 'young men' are never tired of quoting it, but its fun is more rollicking, and not so refined.

CHAPTER VII.

LETTERS.

However it may be with the artist, the literary man always welcomes with pleasure the genuine appreciation of some humbler correspondent, written, say, from some far-off, obscure little town. Something in his book has touched this honest admirer, and he must express his feelings. Any book which reveals personal sentiment and taste is sure to attract in this way. Such testimonials have come to the present writer from America, Australia, Denmark, Norway, Iceland even. They should be always gratefully acknowledged, as such tributes are far more flattering than official criticisms. The writer then surely knows that he has hit the mark.

He must be on his guard, however, against the autograph collectors, of whom there are a great number, and who season their application with a

feigned admiration. The ordinary writer must not lay the flattering unction to his soul that his handwriting is desired on account of his celebrity. It is wanted for strictly commercial purposes, for completing sets of autographs, for 'Grangerizing' books and the like, or for illustrating topographical histories, where a specimen of the native's handwriting comes in handily. Forster's 'Life of Dickens' is a favourite work for 'Grangerizing.' The present writer figures in it *passim;* his writing, therefore, is desirable and a necessity. I am too modest to put it on any higher ground than this.*

A stray applicant, however, may have a wish to see the writing of one whose book has entertained him. Something may have touched his sympathies.

From New York I once received a letter with compliments on some articles I had written in the *Art Journal*, and which concluded: 'I wish, indeed, to make a request to one who is so competent a judge in these matters. *Could you give me the name of a first-rate London*

* I find there is a sort of regulated tariff for writers of the different classes. Two shillings is the usual price for a fair letter of the average working-writer.

tailor, who you think would dress a man properly and fashionably ?'

Another American wrote to me from Cambridge (Mass.) University. He had read a little book of mine on 'Dramatic Expression,' etc. He wished me to recommend him 'some teacher of dramatic action or elocution.' He was coming to London, and 'wished to improve the speaking voice and his powers of expression after the method of Delsarte.'

One of the pleasantest incidents in writing a book, such as a record of some celebrated person, lends a dramatic interest to the progress of composition. This is the intercommunication with other writing men, interested in the work like himself, the discussions and controversies, the numerous letters, speculations, etc Few can conceive the amount of this pleasant and friendly co-operation, and how much every work owes to this aid. It is extraordinary, too, what unselfishness is revealed on these occasions. There is generally in most provincial cities or districts some amiable parson, doctor, or antiquary, kindly, communicative men, who are eager to tell you everything. I have invariably found that an application to the local clergyman

will bring forth the most practical results. If he be indifferent himself, he will know of someone else who will aid. It is surprising what unsophisticated, amiable, Vicar-of-Wakefield sort of persons you thus come upon. I could not enumerate the stores of agreeable communications which have reached me in this way, each full of earnest zeal and honest enthusiasm, and making one feel to the writer as to a friend.

Some will prepare for you with much zeal genealogical tables; others will copy letters, extracts from parish registers, and the like. When I published an account of Wilkes, I one day received from the overworked Sir Edward Watkin a handsome photograph of a piece of plate that had been presented to the agitator, which he had most kindly thought would be interesting to me. Trunkfuls of papers have been placed at my disposal. More curious still is it to find members of the family of whom you are writing, and whom you supposed to have been long since extinct, appearing in an unexpected way. I remember once having a communication from a near relation of Dr. Dodd, whose life I had written.

As a specimen of the friendly aid literary men

give each other, I may quote a passage from a letter of my friend Mr. Churton Collins—that admirable, well-read critic:

'Should you be bringing out another edition of your book on Dr. Dodd, may I direct your attention to two passages which may interest you, should you not have come across them? There is a very vivid picture of Dodd's interview with Lord Chesterfield, after he was arrested, in Thomas Brasbridge's "Memoirs." And in the notes to Colton's "Hypocrisy" there is an explanation of Lord Chesterfield's conduct which seems to me very satisfactory. I have had occasion to study Lord Chesterfield very carefully, and in the *Quarterly Review* I endeavoured to point out that he has been misrepresented, and what a finely-tempered man he really was. His conduct to Dr. Dodd had always seemed to me wholly at variance with his natural temper and character. But in the passage to which I refer, and which I will transcribe, it is explained:

'"The Earl had advanced very considerable sums of money for the sole use and benefit of an unfortunate young woman the object of his lordship's youthful gallantry. . . . It came out that she had been kept by Dodd in a state

approaching to starvation, while he had applied the money to such ostentatious largesses as were better suited to his ambition and worldly views. The King was not ignorant of this."'

Once I wrote for the *Illustrated London News* some sketches of a short and agreeable Dutch tour made with my friend Mr. F. Langton, which brought this letter to the editor from a sensible Dutchman :

'I was in a train on the Rhine Railway with three young misses and a gentleman also English, who gabbled much of their hopes soon to arrive in Dresden, or some other beautiful place in Germany, and above all things to escape from the dreariness of this "wretched Holland, where there is nothing to see." It happened that the conductor came during these declamations to examine the tickets and to answer inquiries. None of these fluent people, unfortunately, were able to get information from him, because in this uninteresting land there is yet the presumption to speak a language of its own. Greatly presuming myself, I overset their English-German into Dutch, and obtained for them the particulars they required. After that, they were too polite to express so strongly any more their dislike of

the country's dulness. By-and-by I said to the young lady next me, "Do you see the cows with their coats on?" Much surprised and delighted, they all crowded to the windows to look at this proof of the farmer's care. When I showed them the clever way in which the haystack is provided with a sliding roof, their joy was much increased, and they began to look to me like children for some more stories. Pointing out the long straight line of trees that fringed the horizon, I showed them how the roots bind together the sandy base of the highroad, and asked them to notice the next we crossed—how neatly paved with bricks on edge, small and hard, called klinkers. As we passed alongside a stream, they joined me in looking at the bundles of small willow boughs tightly packed and puddled in with clay by which the banks were built up and strengthened. Their eyes sparkled with delight, and now they saw the use of those ugly pollards, so plentiful but so unpleasantly numerous, which had lately been among the subjects of their scorn. "But there is so much water," they pleaded, almost adding to it with their rising tears. "Yes, and all this land has been won from the waters by the

enterprise and dogged resolution of the people." They followed me as I pointed out the long thin grooves cut in the polder—that is, the drained marsh—and the little floodgates by which the labourer waters the land with his foot; the cross ditches with their larger gates, and the mills for pumping when there should be need. They huddled round me as I told them the sad story of the Bilsbosch at Dordrecht, where many villages lie still beneath the quiet waters; of the hurry-scurry when a dyke shows signs of strain, and Boers and Vrouws run helter-skelter with beds and blanket, and even houses may be pulled down, to stop the leak. How many other things there are, through which customarily rushes on the Briton with his eyes much too wide open to be easily moved, while he looks about and sees as little as possible; this I could only partly tell them. It was perhaps some sweet but delicious satisfaction to hear them say that they were very sorry they must leave all this curious old-world interest behind so soon.

'I beg to tender through you, sir, my compliments to the author, whose pleasant little paper I read yesterday, my first opportunity of reading.' The reader will profit by this advice.

Some years ago a letter was sent to me which seemed to me of a flattering kind. It ran :

'I am wanting to address our young men, in response to their request, by way of a lecture upon the art of composition, and the means essential to form a forcible and interesting style of expression. I have thought that the only way by which I could add any considerable interest and usefulness to an evening's pleasant intercourse upon such a topic would be to secure, if at all possible, a personal testimony of the experience of one or two of our most skilful authors.

'To this end I have taken the very great liberty to write to you and solicit your generous help. May I be permitted to ask whether, in early life, you gave yourself any special training with a view to the formation of style ; and also whether you can give us any information of your own methods that would aid us to realize in some degree, at least, the secret of your own great power in the use of clear and forcible English ?

'I write to you because your finely-conceived stories and helpful writings are cherished friends of my own—delightful companions wichh give me more pleasure than I can well say ; and also

because I feel in asking such a favour that you must be so accustomed to people getting truly attached to you by reason of your books, that you will readily forgive the request if you cannot grant it.

'If I am giving you any trouble, or ignorantly making an undue demand on your time, pray forgive me. But should you find yourself able to spare a few minutes to do us the kind service, I can assure you of the gratitude of many beside myself.'

Now this was very nice, genuine, too, and cordial. Who would not help the modest country lecturer, desirous to improve his little following by the aid of others' experience? He had selected *you*, perhaps one or two more, no doubt, because there was something in your career, and the earnest, unpretending way you had followed it out. It would benefit his young fellows to hear your story. Naturally, therefore, it was told to him with candour, and perhaps copiousness.

Nothing more was heard of the matter for many months, when a little book appeared containing a vast number of authors' confessions, just like my own, set out at length! It professed to be a sort of writer's manual, show-

ing the methods adopted by most of the writers of the day, great and small. They had all 'taken the bait.' The simple country lecturer frankly confessed and explained the ingenious method by which he had baited his hook, and made the authors write his book for him. The open cynicism of this confession disarmed severity, and there was loud laughter.

I look back with much satisfaction to the part I took in exposing a rather audacious literary imposture which was attempted some years ago. A great 'find' of Sheridan's 'love-letters to his wife' was announced with much flourish, and a lengthy article appeared in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, then edited by Mr. Comyns Carr, in which the discovery was set forth, and abundant specimens of the new and curious documents were given. Not long before, I had published a memoir of Sheridan, and I confess it was with a sore feeling of disappointment that I heard of this 'discovery,' which unhappily came a little too late to be of service.

A person who has made a particular subject his special study can form an almost instantaneous judgment in a matter of this kind—a glance will do—and at my first glance I became convinced

that the letters were spurious, and had nothing to do with Sheridan. The audacity of the proceeding was really amazing. It is evidence of the curious change in public feeling, and the general ignorance and insensibility produced by the too abundant objects which distract the general attention, that this fabrication did not excite any attention. The sham papers seemed to be as acceptable as though they were genuine. I drew up a statement which I despatched to my friend, Moy Thomas, for his Monday morning's theatrical column. But on consideration, and after consultation with the editor, it was determined that it should be brought forward in a more prominent way, and a full *exposé* of the business was prepared.

It appears that 'when the fire broke out which destroyed Drury Lane Theatre in 1809, all the papers which could be found in Sheridan's private room were hurriedly packed into barrels and carried away. Some of these barrels were in the confusion thrust into neighbouring cellars, where they remained undisturbed for over sixty years, after which lapse of time they were brought to light and examined, in the hope of their containing documents of interest.' This hope proved to

be well founded, for 'amongst the heterogeneous mass of papers' in the 'barrels' was discovered a series of most interesting letters addressed to Sheridan by his first wife, the beautiful Eliza Linley. Nor was this all. By a second happy chance, the same persons secured another miscellaneous 'lot' of Sheridan's autographs written on the backs of playing-cards, backs of letters, etc., and, more interesting still, a lengthy letter of Miss Linley's, setting forth minutely every incident of her famous elopement to France. With this material it seemed that the life of the gifted Brinsley could almost be written afresh. When we consider the native carelessness of the man, whole 'barrels' of papers are indeed a welcome novelty. We can fancy the relish with which the explorer turned over the rich hoard, coming now on a letter, say, from Fox or Grey, now on a rough draft of a scene for a drama, or, more piquant still, some highly confidential paper from the Regent. Unluckily, these barrels suggested the famous 'chest' of Chatterton, 'the marvellous boy,' or the more famous box of the Shakespearian old gentleman who supplied W. H. Ireland with his treasures.

The absurd legend of the 'barrels' can be at

once disposed of. It is well known that, in the suddenness and fury of the conflagration at Drury Lane, nothing was saved except some account-books rescued from the treasurer's room. Old letters and memoranda are not exactly the sort of property a 'salvage corps' thinks of rescuing or loading into barrels. Sheridan was notoriously careless about papers, nor did he ever store his archives at the theatre. He rarely took the trouble even to open his letters. It is highly improbable that the precious 'barrels' lying unnoticed should for over sixty years have been held sacred by the scum of Drury Lane lodgers who rented the cellars.

A natural inquiry, too, was made as to the devolution of title, as it might be called, of the barrels. Who was the lucky finder or purchaser —when and how were they discovered? As this was pressed with a damaging iteration, a book-seller, whose shop-window is the entertainment of the St. James's Street lounger, came forward. He, it seems, had purchased the contents of the barrels at the late Mr. Lacy's sale in 1873. Yet this left curiosity unsatisfied, though the barrel origin was somewhat timorously hinted at by the dealer, who said that the papers were in a

'filthy condition,' as if 'soiled by water.' But it occurred to the sagacious Moy Thomas—the entertaining critic who provides the readers of the *Daily News* with a weekly column of theatrical news—to turn back to the sale catalogue of Mr. Lacy's treasures, to see how the contents of the barrels were marshalled and described. So 'heterogeneous' a mass should fill pages at least. We might look for the auctioneer's usual flourishings—'A series of love-letters from Miss Linley, etc.;' 'Letters from Mrs. Sheridan to her husband.' In such cases, extracts or 'tit-bits' are often printed to whet the appetite. Messrs. Sotheby—'old auctioneering hands'—have an eye to what is telling. But, to his astonishment, our critic found that the vast 'heterogeneous mass' of papers was modestly squeezed into a single line, thus: 'Sheridan, R. B., various autograph letters and other papers relating to him.' Further, it appears there was so little competition for this tempting lot that it was 'knocked down'—the contents of the barrels—for the modest sum of two guineas.

I have alluded to Miss Linley's lengthy narrative of her elopement, which would fill many printed pages. Practically it does, for unluckily

it was published on the appearance of Moore's 'Life of Sheridan,' and was by him contemptuously put aside as a clumsy forgery. Now, to be found in company with such a document throws more than a suspicion on its fellows. It would be easy to procure a genuine specimen of the fair Linley's handwriting with which to compare the letters. Further, the style alone condemned them, and a critic familiar with the literature of that time could have little hesitation in rejecting them. Here is a single specimen, of an endearing character :

'My Dearest,

'I send a little *fiff* by Tom, to ask e how e do, and to know how e are all going on there, and if e have heard how the K—— behaved at the Levee to-day—pray send me a line to the Theatre, for e know what an anxious Poush I am. God thee love, my own one. I'll love e for ever, let what will happen.'

Now, apart from the ridiculous attempts at archaic expression, the little 'fiff,' 'Poush,' 'e,' 'God thee love'—clumsy libels on the really charming and vivacious style of the genuine

letters—there is one fact which is convincing as to the imposture. It was common in magazines and newspapers to allude to his Majesty as 'The K,' and the fabricator foolishly imagined that, in a private letter from a wife to her husband, this harmless allusion to the Levée, and the abbreviation, would impart a sort of local colour. Further, in the confidential letters of Miss Linley to her betrothed, we find, 'My dearest S——n,' which looks as if it had been copied from some printed volume. We are then introduced to a good-natured Yorkshire doctor, who prescribed for Miss Linley in France, and who is made to address his letter to 'Monsieur Sherridan,' unable, apparently, to spell so familiar a name.

These spurious compositions had no doubt been artfully blended with scraps of the genuine material, whose flavour might leaven the whole. Dealers in butterine are thus careful to have present a modicum of the purer Dorset. In this connection I was inclined to submit a hypothesis which I believed would clear up the mystery of the 'barrels.' One of the puzzles of the case was a letter of Miss Linley's, in which she lapsed into such vulgarities of spelling and expression as 'half-nacked,' 'bright Hevn's!' 'which I had

colected since our long absense.' These low terms seemed to suit ill with our ideal of the elegant, accomplished Elizabeth, of whom Wilkes spoke in raptures, and whose refinement Reynolds and Gainsborough have immortalized. Now, by a curious chance, some years ago, I recalled hearing of a collection of 'love letters,' if they might be so called, which had been addressed to the volatile Brinsley, not by the fair Elizabeth, but by notorious Cyprians of the town, and which the discreet manager for obvious reasons had addressed to his theatre rather than to his private residence. Moore, in his Diary, relates a piquant anecdote of how these compromising papers were stolen from the theatre for purposes of *chantage*, and recovered by Sheridan by an ingenious device. Could it be that these papers, unpresentable in their original shape, had been adroitly adapted and altered? But poor Elizabeth Linley! This surely would be the most cruel of her long series of trials.

Such was this curious imposture, and I think it will be admitted that it was disposed of in a satisfactory way.

There have been many discussions on the policy of 'keeping letters,' and it is in truth an

embarrassing question, especially in the case of a large and promiscuous correspondence. It is agreed, I believe, that the choice rests between wholesale destruction and wholesale preservation. It seems to me, however, that it is somewhat wanton to sacrifice such pleasant memorials, natural expressions of regard and good feeling, fragments, as it were, of other people's minds. It seems like a wayward child breaking its toys. Where correspondents are of worth or note the holocaust is almost unaccountable. How many autograph-hunters have groaned over that vast *auto da fè* made one day by Dickens, when he consigned to the flames, without the slightest reserve, the vast collection of letters addressed to him from almost everyone of 'light and leading' in the world!

It is a half-pleasant, half-sad business, the turning over of these faded records—like walking through the chambers of some old mansion that has been abandoned and shut up. I have taken the trouble to arrange mine in large folio volumes, and wherever it was possible I have added the portraits of the writers. This forms a curious and very interesting miscellany. It is singular how dramatic are some of these productions, even in

the case of ordinary, unpretending acquaintances. For there are numbers who *put themselves* into their letters, and take pleasure in setting down what they feel, or in describing minutely what they have seen ; who, in short, take as much pains as though they were writing for the press. How welcome is a letter full of news, comments on characters, lively remarks, and the like! Most persons could write in this way if they chose, but it requires some enthusiasm and labour. It should be remembered that any average family could furnish a dramatic history, the members supplying characters of different kinds, their letters, adventures, etc., being all of interest if told without affectation. The letters of literary men are always characteristic, some writing in a strictly reserved fashion, and saying as little as possible ; others friendly and encouraging ; others, again, full of good-nature.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ART OF OBSERVING.

Travelling is thought to be one of the grand enjoyments of life, yet few know how to travel. The popular notion is to go and 'see things,' to be taken to all the wonderful objects in a town—cathedrals, palaces, picture-galleries, and the rest, and stare at them. This, after a very little repetition, becomes weary work, and stupid too. To really enjoy travel, associations and suggestion must be cultivated. The process should be intellectual, with the show-objects as background. No one is so well equipped in this way as the literary man, whose busy mind, well practised in observation, will see a thousand things that escape others. At home, even in London streets, he is always travelling in this fashion. For him, even so trite a thing as a night-journey will seem poetical and romantic, not to be missed or slept

through. He loves to store his memory with picturesque scenes, which he can gaze at later again and again, when in the mood.

I am tempted to give a few illustrations of this system, to show how travel on even the smallest scale can be thus enriched. The recipe is a very simple one, and, I fancy, the traveller who learns to use it will feel not a little thankful to me for thus adding to his enjoyment.

Let us take, for instance, that captivating old city, Antwerp. Many a 'tripper' is attracted to it, and many a 'tripper' is seen lounging through its streets, 'doing' the cathedral, the galleries, the Plantin Museum, and the rest. It is a place which everyone is pleased with. The astonishing spire is pointed out for admiration, the green curtains of the great pictures are drawn aside, the guide points out this and that. By the end of a couple of days everything has been shown and gazed at, and we have had enough of the place. Well, now let us contrast with this my own unpretending methods, which I think will be welcomed by those who are beginning to find a monotony in the old system.

It is the approach to this fine old city that furnishes half the romance of the thing. Awak-

ing early in the Scheldt, we can see through the port-hole the rich green pasture-land of the low-lying Flemish country, with little patches of red tiling dotted here and there afar off. This first glimpse of Flanders always affects one curiously from the tone of desolation or sadness—it supplies a sort of thrill of surprise, from the novelty and contrast with our gayer and more populous pastures. Coming up on deck, I follow our meandering course with a strange interest, and far away descry a sort of little white needle rising from the level plain, which a sailor tells us is Antwerp spire. For two hours we glide on, the spire seeming to grow out of the plain—no town visible at its feet. We think of the old history of this fairy-like landmark, of all that it has witnessed —of Charles V., the religious wars, Napoleon, and the rest. Gradually it draws nearer and yet nearer, patches of houses become visible, when all of a sudden the whole breaks on us like a scene in an opera.

Turning a corner, as it were, we are in the gay, picturesque port, full of life, colour, and animation. Few who ever saw it will forget the picture of the old quays that glided past, the old grimed, shattered-looking houses, with their red roofs

clustered together, while close by, over their heads, rises the spire of the sublime cathedral. That matchless scene has long been swept away, and now vulgar quays and sheds have taken its place. That method of approach we cannot repeat again.

Or another way—this time a night-piece. Once, making a short yacht voyage from Ostend to Flushing, and thence to Antwerp, we found ourselves entering the port at midnight, with the shipping and vast docks about us. There were the scattered lights, the quays and houses, magnified by the uncertain light, and the cathedral spire looming mysteriously in the background. Never shall I forget that tranquil scene. As we touched the quay and ascended the steep stairs, a shadowy *douanier* in his cloak and hood met us. Then came the walk through the antique by-streets and alleys until we gained the pretty Place Verte, under the cathedral tower, from which the silvery music of the chimes broke out. There we halted at the door of the St. Antoine Hotel, then a rather old-fashioned hostelry, where we gained admission with difficulty.

At Calais there is always a sort of romance about the midnight landing, which repetition

does not enfeeble. It may have been a calm, tranquil night, and we have been bewildered by the dazzling lighthouse, which has been flashing at us during the passage with wonderful energy. Of a sudden the vessel glides up between the wickerwork piers, alongside the new 'Maritime Station,' as it is called, so inviting with its well-lighted hall, and the tall electric lamps revealing the motley rows of *douaniers*, soldiers, police, porters, all ready waiting.

Far away the town lies in shadow; the clustered fishing-boats fast asleep between us and the darkly-outlined church spires and steeples of the old town-hall. Up to about a dozen years ago the vessel always threaded its way through the fishing-boats well up to the town. The weary, battered passengers had to totter, as best they could, to the station, whose illuminated clock, staring wide open all night like a watchful eye, offered a sort of cheerful welcome. Friendly voices gasped out 'Dessin's,' while the utterer was seized on by the Good Samaritan of the house, and assisted kindly into one of the two ancient coaches of the place.

It was something, too, to see 'the Overland Mail,' as it was then called, brought ashore—the

bags in a rough-and-ready way heaped up into the great carts and bundled off to the railway. Or it may have been some stormy, buffeting night of general misery, as it too often is, and the intrepid boat has made its way through tumbling breakers that drenched the suffering passengers with spray. How grateful for these poor half-drowned beings to totter ashore and sink into a seat in the brilliant, well-lighted hall—paradise almost!

While the trunks are tumbling and clattering on the platform, and the huge hall is filled with 'gorgers,' a hundred feeding like one, I would walk away across the docks and bridges to the town, not encountering a soul, save one other belated traveller. How welcome the first musical 'janglings' of the old town-hall chimes, telling that it is a quarter to one! Crossing the effective Place, with all the cafés closed, I turn down a little by-street, known in the old times as Rue Neuve, lately re-named Amiral Courbet, and make for that old cosy shelter, Dessin's Hotel, still noting the fantastic, demon-like freaks of the lighthouse, which is busy making sweeping circles with its bull's-eye, now flashing into the bedroom window, now on the pavement, now on the roof of the church, exactly like Mr. Pickwick's lantern.

These wild antics have rather an uncanny effect.

Here is a long white building, with a range of windows—this new-old Dessin's Hotel, but still quite old enough; the regular pattern of the French hotel in the by-street, to which at midnight the voyager has been driven many a time, the *cocher* cracking his whip to let all within know he is coming. A worthy woman in sabots admits me. Late as it is, the place is sure to be lighted up; there is the smiling court or garden, with its flowers and old trees; and opposite, through the open door, a quaint, old-fashioned short stair, with 'flourished' banisters.

Round the court runs an old-fashioned arcade, the gallery over which has been glazed in. The ghost of Mr. Sterne might be abroad, though he did not patronize *this* house, which in his day bore the sign of the 'Silver Lion'—the effigy of the lion still rampant and prancing aloft in the pediment of the house. The worthy *Calaisienne* leads the way up to a rather stately chamber on the first floor, set off with old-fashioned furniture, tall, 'skimpy' mirrors, red velvet, and florid Louis XV. decorations. It seemed like the far-off days of first going to France, the air of

old fashion was so complete. The spick-and-span rooms yonder at the new Hôtel Maritime, on the quay, might be contrasted with this antique retirement and solitude. One might be said to have the whole place to one's self, for there were not above two or three guests in the house. In the morning it was always pleasant to look from the gallery down into the leafy courtyard, with numerous glass doors opening upon it.

It is always a novel sensation, wandering over this interesting old town, for interesting it is, in spite of the wholesale levelling and 'pulling to pieces' it has lately undergone. The old walls, stout and gamboge-coloured, which gave it so fortresslike an air, are gone, the ditches filled up; the handsome and monumental Richelieu gate is swept away. Still, the Place remains, always quaint and picturesque, with its narrow, irregularly-shaped houses, and the old town-hall. Hogarth's gate, with its drawbridge, indeed, still hobbles on, but sadly mauled and defaced.

As can be seen from his picture, it was in his day handsomely decorated with sculptures; and at one period could be made out the traces of the English royal arms on one side, which had been

but partially erased. Near it was another gateway, and there was always a piquant, bizarre effect in entering the town from the port, through these archways. Of a sudden, you found yourself in a narrow street, and presently emerged on the Place.

The old, or *oldest*, Dessin's used to be a delightfully inviting inn, with a history and most interesting associations. We can go back to Sterne, who in the year 1767 made the place famous by his descriptions of the proprietor, of the guests, and the house itself, in his 'Sentimental Journey.' His delicate, exquisitely touched sketches of the monk, the lady, the *petit-maître*, and the *désobligeante*, are known to all, and have given the old building a picturesque vitality — even a century later, as we stand in its courtyard, these shadows seem to haunt the place. Only great writers can impart this feeling. Often the town is 'in festival,' with a thoroughly French air of gala, the band playing in the Place, and the residents—the poor exiles included—seated round on chairs, arrayed in their best. The hotels are busy.

Near the Rue Royale the traveller in those old days found himself near a low, gamboge-

coloured wall, with an open gateway, and trees within in a spacious courtyard that would have held many a postchaise. This was Dessin's, no longer a hotel, and since the year 1860 converted into the town museum. Here stood the *désobligeante*, and here Mr. Sterne talked with the lady. A tiled roof and dormer windows, tiled also, rose over the gateway. They used to show Sterne's room, erst No. 31, in the right wing, adorned with the well-known lithograph after Sir Joshua, and professing to have the old furniture. Over the door was written 'Sterne's Room.'

Forty or fifty years ago a prying traveller discovered a date cut on the stones, '1770,' which was two years after Sterne's death; and he reasoned that this must be a sham 'Sterne's Room.' There had been, indeed, a fire about the middle of last century, but it was found, on consulting the *Annales de Calais*, that this conflagration, which menaced the whole quarter, had occurred in September, 1764, some three years before Sterne's last visit. It was a curious feeling, rambling through these chambers. Yet there were other ghosts haunting the old inn, quite as famous, for here were the rooms, unmarked, where Goldsmith slept, and the notorious Duchess of

Kingston, and Mrs. Piozzi, with her great friend, Lady Hamilton; and here Brummell used to come regularly to dine.

Behind the hotel, and stretching back to the Rue Leveux, were the gardens, exceeding fair and spacious, full of fine old trees, which offered a great charm for the guest. Indeed, there are several of these fine gardens in the little town, whose trees are seen over the high enclosing walls. At the bottom of Dessin's garden still stands the old theatre, built by the proprietor over a century ago as an attraction for his guests, who could leisurely walk down to it when *table d'hôte* was over. This is now the Town Theatre; but, alas! the fine gardens, the hotel itself, courtyard, 'Sterne's Room,' all are swept away.

At the 'Silver Lion' the waiter spoke to me of the proprietor, 'Madame,' who, though advanced in years, still administered the place. Who was 'Madame'? Why, Madame Dessin herself—a lady, he said, who was perfectly 'accessible' and glad to see strangers.

Would he present my compliments to the hostess and say that a gentleman who had written the life of 'le grand Sterne,' and also much about her hotel, would be glad to have a little conversation

with her? She was 'discovered,' as the plays have it, in her old-fashioned little suite of rooms, whose windows were pleasantly shaded by the foliage in the court. A quiet, interesting old lady she was, in black, with gray curls and a soft manner. We had a very pleasant chat, lasting nearly an hour. Her husband, she told me, had been the grandson of the famous and 'original Dessin,' who had died about the end of last century, leaving two children to the guardianship of Quillacq. Quillacq and Dessin were the two great hotel-keeping families of Calais. Her husband was the son of one of these children, and had left her the business to carry on. In 1860, as we have seen, she had leased the old inn to the town for a museum. But about twelve years ago came the sorest trial of all. The Government coveted her fair gardens and courtyards—spacious ground, and valuable in a contracted, fortified little town. She was pressed and pressed to sell. She told with pride and awe how the Prefect *himself* waited on her, and tempted her with vast sums. 'Oh, sir, how I suffered!' The good old lady wept as she told of her struggles. She was told that a sub-prefecture would be established in the town, that handsome offices would be built;

her patriotism was appealed to, and, as she said, 'she was *trop bonne Calaisienne*' to hold out. At last she yielded, the old buildings were levelled, and Sterne's good old Dessin's was swept out of existence.

Passing from this painful subject, the old dame began to talk of the 'Sentimental Journey' and its author, and brought me out a magnificent copy of the work with various travellers' inscriptions. She had still a room labelled 'Sterne's,' an amiable fiction, supported by the fact that some of the old furniture had been transferred to it. I took my leave of this amiable old personage with regret.

Such a little incident, with a proper interest in celebrated persons, gives life and character to travelling, and makes it a totally different thing from the hurry-skurry of the ordinary tourist.

CHAPTER IX.

LEAVES FROM MY DIARY.

To show how much entertainment and profit may be gathered from simple observation of the scenes going on about us, and of the traits of character that display themselves, I am tempted to supply here specimens of my own method—some extracts of a very unpretending kind from my diary.

Few people understand how to keep a diary, but with practice, and, above all, a habit of sincerity to one's self, it is an easy, pleasant, and useful business. There are, of course, 'things in diary clothing'—dry, regular double-entry affairs—as in the annually purchased 'Letts.' These are so much book-keeping, records of movements, walks, etc., uninteresting, though of value to the business or busy man. In that now forgotten piece of humour, 'Little Pedlington,' a worthy old Fencible officer kept his diary with inflexible regularity,

every day's entry being almost the same, as, 'Rose 8; bre'k'ted 9; walked 11; dined 2,' etc.; and so on, day after day, 'Bre'k'ted 9,' etc.' It has been said that as we grow old or elderly it seems to be 'always Monday morning.' The week seems to fly by; it slips through our fingers. We may look forward, indeed, and see a long stretch before us, with crowded trees and houses, but behind it is all like the smooth, open ocean seen from the deck on which we stand. 'Our days have passed by swifter than a post.' We have dim memories of scenes so enjoyed, but the details have vanished. Yet is it possible to retain some indications; a few spirited notes, catch-words as it were, dashed in when the sensations are fresh, will revive them. Those elaborate records, kept so laboriously by Moore and Crabb Robinson, with every joke and reflection entered as in a ledger, are too artificial. They were written to be published, to be read by others, not by the writers.

'Impressions' are what we should most love to preserve, and what we always long to recover. The most literal and accurate description of a scene, a town, or a building is not *suggestive*, minute though it be; the real charm is found in how it has affected us, in the *impression* left.

How many delightful days have been thus lost to us for ever for want of some little record! This, however, is a sort of art; it requires a knack of composition, a power of picturesque selection and arrangement. In my own notes, kept for many a year, I have sketches of all sorts—of dinner-parties, excursions, *bons mots*, curious pieces of secret history, anecdotes, travels, and so on. But among such records I find my old 'impressions' to be the most agreeable. Many commonplace or unthinking people are content with the simple enjoyment of what they have enjoyed, and then dismiss it from their recollection; but such recollections ought to be nourished and nurtured—laid up carefully in lavender, as it were, or as in a cabinet, to be taken out occasionally. We should not let our happy days and happy seasons 'pass away like a weaver's shuttle.'

Everywhere is found comedy. There are scenes of life, almost as entertaining as what we see on the stage, always going on about us and before us, if we only know where to look for them, or, rather, *how* to look for them. For this, a sort of training, or methodized observation, is necessary, a piercing to what lies below the surface. Humours are found everywhere, and are con-

stantly presenting themselves, but the ordinary languid observer lets them pass before him as mere phenomena. A trifling illustration, taken from my records, will show what I mean.

'I was once invited to witness a performance given by the youths of a large school—a "rendition" of "The Merchant of Venice," got up with suitable scenery and dresses, and to which the local magnates were invited. Whispers went round that we should see *real good acting* on this occasion, and that there was a performer—Sprow shall be his name—who was very remarkable for his gifts. He appeared to us as a most repulsive, usurious-looking Hebrew, not "the gentlemanly Jew" of the Lyceum, but a hook-nosed, crafty villain. How he declaimed and hissed out his lines! The Masters looked on with pride. Sprow won tumultuous applause at every speech (and he seemed to *have* every speech) from companions and admirers. Honest fellows! They thought that Irving might presently have to look to his laurels. It was amusing, the genuineness of the performance, the thorough confidence with which this execrable Jew threw himself into his work, made up as a sort of Ghoorka, dark and villainous. He always kept himself in a sort of crouching

attitude, growling out his speeches with a fiendish intensity. But the slowness of it, every sentence taking minutes! As for the others, the Duke, Bassanio, Antonio, they were completely overshadowed by Sprow; nor, indeed, did they *want* to be in the forefront. Sprow was enough for them. The leader of the local orchestra felt that here was his opportunity, and took all the airs of conductorship—white gloves, baton, etc., controlling his forces with vehement gestures, as though they were fifty strong, instead of a dozen. When Sprow had been thoroughly unmasked, baffled, his goods "confiscate to the State," had given his last glare, there came unexpectedly a sort of "grand parade" of all the characters, the memory of which, even at this distance, always comes back upon me with the most diverting effect. For the Court broke up abruptly; the whole corps, including the Doge, who specially descended from his high seat for the purpose, began to march round and round to the music of a modern quick march, "Les Volontaires," I think. The last item was Sprow himself, who, as he passed in front—and he did so many times—invariably paused to assume a crouching attitude of ferocity, turning round to flourish his knife and scales with a

hideous, bloodthirsty capering at the audience, who responded with encouraging shouts. Then he would resume his march reluctantly enough.

'The parade went on and on, it seemed, for hours, diversified by the ingenious figures of a sort of country dance, crossings and recrossings; but it was always contrived, or *he* contrived it, that, after some temporary obscuration, so as to make his presence missed, our Jew should re-appear in his old place in the front, pausing to renew the crouching, the flourishing of the knife and scales. This never seemed to pall. The evolutions seemed likely to go on for ever, the Doge and his friends promenading it *ad infinitum*. The local conductor was only too well pleased to give his march over and over again, and the stage-manager, equally delighted, could not bring himself to ring down the curtain. But it did fall at last, only to be raised again in obedience to shouts of delight, when the whole was gone over again. As the curtain finally shut out the scene, we had one last glimpse of the truculent Sprow, bent double, and flourishing his knife at us. That scene often comes back to me, and always with the same sense of enjoyment. On no theatre-stage have I seen anything more diverting.'

Now, here was a trifle, and I have little doubt that most of the spectators saw little in it that was absurd. Yet, I venture to say, even the description just given, imperfect as it is, must provoke a smile. There is comedy in the delightful genuineness, the thorough belief that the Jew was thus most effectively presented. It was the schoolboy's Jew.

Again, what little scenes the lover of character and of studies of social life will find going on around him if he but keep his eyes open! In my diary is this little sketch: 'A curious little drama the other night at a music-hall. Beside me sat a pair; he a showy-looking fellow, good-looking but dissipated, who was twisting his moustache and looking constantly round; she, a pale, anxious young woman, rather worn and faded, and older than he. She was following the show with much interest and enjoyment. She had been taken out, so I gathered from a stray remark, for an evening's pleasure; but he was entirely indifferent. He grew more and more restless, and at last, with a whisper, got up and went off. He was away, I suppose, half an hour; she was still interested, but beginning to be a little distracted. When he returned, he

again showed the same indifference to the show, which he found tedious, and after fresh restlessness again went off. It was now painful to watch her growing uneasiness. The performance lost all its interest; she was perpetually looking round. He never returned. At last I went away, and, passing by the garish bar, saw our friend lounging gracefully over the counter and pursuing an animated conversation with one of the glittering ladies who dispense the drinks.' The poor, patient, anxious wife, how long had she to wait, and how much of the past, the present, and the future was suggested by this little scene! It is only an habitual observer that would have noticed it.

I confess to a love of anything in the shape of an adventure—of anything, in short, that helps to make life *dramatic*, and vary its monotony. I do not mean, of course, serious, uncomfortable adventures, but unusual methods of travel, instead of following the humdrum beaten track; curious characters, out-of-the-way places, and such irregularities—these are my fancy. With this state of feeling I find that you have not to look for adventures, but that adventures come to you. The truth is, there is always something dramatic

and original awaiting us everywhere, even in the most hackneyed scenes; but we must learn how to wait for it, and find it.

It is thus that quiet, observing people, who have kept in mind the apologue of 'eyes and no eyes,' will discover in some uninviting place that everybody passes by something new and curious. We may thus explore London itself again and again, and discover something that, related to others, will surprise them. Thus, once more to give an almost trivial specimen of this kind of observation:

'One of the most charming and original spots in London is the riverside Terrace at the Tower. As we saunter here, it is delightful to watch the river beside us, the passing steamers, the bustle, the general air and tone of "the Port." It produces a curious feeling to look down at the entrance-channel below, at the arched "Traitor's Gate," while above rise the "Towers of Julius." It is only recently that this walk has been opened, or reopened, to the public.

'The worthy beefeaters have been shorn of their scarlet glories, and appear in a dark undress. A rare entertainment is it to go round with one of these, the honest rustics gaping with delight, and devouring his words of wisdom. I recall a

touch of character here that "entertained me mightily."

'One of these burly veterans, who displayed a huge bushy beard and many medals, was standing close by when a party of French passed, men and women, and made their way to the Terrace. He called them back in rough tones; at the time it was forbidden. One of the party, a young Frenchman, spoke English fairly, and, in a moment, I noticed them all grouped round the warrior, the young Frenchman speaking deferentially. The beefeater stood in the centre, erect and gruff. I next saw the young man take up the medals that lay on the capacious chest with a sort of delicate reverence, which he *exhibited* to the Frenchwomen, who showed admiration by various little cries of rapture. The beefeater only half liked it, but he was clearly flattered by the familiarity. He condescended to some short, blunt particulars as to his campaigns, gave the party also some directions as to what they were to see, then strode majestically away, followed by their admiring eyes. Suddenly he stopped and called out abruptly: "And, I say! *If ye likes, ye can walk along the Terrace yonder!*"

'The blunt, half-ashamed way in which this courtesy was bestowed was delightful.'

During the Jubilee year there was a great incursion of German potentates of all degrees—kings, princes, grand-dukes. Among these were the King of Saxony and the Regent of Bavaria, who were quartered in the Pimlico district, at the Buckingham Palace Hotel. Being Catholics, these high and puissant rulers used to attend an early Mass at the little chapel in Palace Street round the corner.

On one of these occasions I witnessed a scene that was grotesque enough. 'The King came at eight—a gentlemanly, well-dressed man, looking about sixty-five—and was accommodated with a prie-dieu close to the altar. Everyone knows what ceremonial and state hedges round the great people in Germany, and how strict is the ceremonial of approach, etc. However, the time for administering the Holy Communion arrived, and a stream of persons made its way to the rails. They were mainly honest old Irish women and men. On reaching the gangway, however, the path was found to be obstructed by his kneeling Majesty; but after a moment's hesitation the Irish proceeded, *sans cérémonie*, to step over his legs! It was a truly comic scene—one coming after the other, like

sheep leaping a stile. His Majesty, at the first crossing of his royal limbs, showed some astonishment, then a sort of horror; and finally, as the stream pursued its course, more and yet more stepping over him, a palpable irritation, not to say alarm, came into his face, and he rose with much annoyance, looking round at his attendants. The Irish, however, knew nothing of him or about him, and now brushed past him in force. The King did not seem to recover this treatment till the end.'

I find in my diary this odd specimen of composition during a dream. It is a trivial thing, but curious. I saw a sort of Shakespearian dame of the Olivia pattern, who addressed me in these words:

> 'I pray you, sir, go hence; but *leave wide open*
> *The back door of opportunity.*'

I awoke and found myself repeating the lines, which had a grotesque Shakespearian twang.

Once, arriving in Paris from Bordeaux very late at night, I repaired to that half-hotel, half-restaurant opposite the Northern station, and known as the Hotel of the Northern Railway. I was detained here for some days waiting for

letters, and was very glad that I had chosen such a hostelry, as it introduced me to a phase of French life and manners with which I was not familiar. Here one could see the routine of restaurant life, under purely domestic conditions. A small spiral stair led down from the hotel above into the very centre of the restaurant, the guests descending every moment. The restaurant was almost the home of the neighbours, who half lived there, dropping in for breakfast and dinner, finally closing the evening with coffee and cigars. I 'made friends' with one of the waiters, who treated me as *enfant de la maison*, and told me all about the habitués. The recurring greediness of these visitors was extraordinary, and from the particularity about favourite dishes, it would seem that their two meals were the all-important incidents of the day. The proprietor, waiters, and all concerned, seemed to agree in this view, such thought and anxiety were expended on the arrangements. Every little table was carefully set out to suit the taste of each expected visitor, and his favourite bottle of wine placed ready. As he entered, he was quickly and courteously attended to, he, with a gruff solemnity, as though some serious matters were impending, absently

suffering his coat, stick, etc., to be taken from him, and hung up in their usual place. Then how he did gorge, his face bent over his plate, his fork held like a spoon, and the victuals 'shovelled' into his mouth! There was a greedy ferocity in the process. I could see it would not be safe to speak to him or interrupt him in any way. But when something was wrong with a dish, what an explosion! His anger was concentrated. Proprietor summoned, waiters gathered round, the hero frantically protesting, almost with tears in his eyes. The offending dish was examined by all. Everyone showed a kind of tender sympathy, and murmured in subdued accents. The eater was soothed, and the proprietor gravely took it away himself: it was a very serious matter.

There was always a sort of theatrical exhibition when a party entered—say a couple of ladies with cavaliers, etc. Everyone took part in it. There was the entrance promenade, done with much effect, the waiters clustering round like flies, taking the garments; then debate over the choice of locality—a very serious matter on which much might depend—the waiters giving smiling assistance. Then the council over the *menu*, the host often called in.

At night, the same old habitués would reappear There was an extraordinary being who would arrive regularly, a tall, large-foreheaded man. He simply ordered a cup of coffee, but he used to walk about, talking half to himself, half aloud. No one minded him or appeared disturbed by him. As he passed a group, they would salute him courteously. The 'lady of the counter' gave a favouring salutation. Still he talked on in a strange, agitated way. My friend the waiter told me all about him. He was an Englishman, a former patron of the place, but who had lost his money. He was mad, but harmless. With all their faults, the French have plenty of these redeeming ways, and this general cordial toleration of the poor distraught stranger, as though it were a matter of course, was really a charming trait. Such a thing would be here thought an injury to business, and no doubt it would be. Customers do not relish such a spectacle.

I lived in this house for nearly a week, and have rarely been better entertained. I got to be quite at home. This far-off quarter of Paris had quite a provincial tone.

I am fond of noting in my diary what are called 'stepping stones'—that linking of persons

to bring a remote era almost within measurable distance. The most authentic and famous of these reminiscences is, of course, that of Dr. Routh, of Oxford, who died in 1854, yet knew a friend of Addison's, had seen Dr. Johnson, and had met persons who had seen Charles II. playing with his dogs in the Park! In my own experience I have met with striking instances. The favourite example, no doubt, is the talking with someone whose ancestor had talked with some spectator at the execution of Charles I. I find in my diary: 'Mr. Campbell Johnston, at the Club to-day, told me of his grandfather, who had talked with someone who had formed part of the guard at the execution of Charles I.' This is, of course, rather general, and a little misty. I find also: 'Admiral Dunlop told me that he had talked with one Peter Lamont, brother to the old Lady Keith, who had shaken hands with Charles Edward in 1745.'

In this connection, my friend, Mr. Edward Bellasis, the Lancaster Herald, has supplied me with a rather curious illustration furnished by his own family. His grandfather, the Rev. George Bellasis, was born in 1730, and was married twice—first in 1757, secondly in 1796. By his first wife he had a son, Joseph, born in

1759; by his second, Sergeant Bellasis, born in 1800. The Sergeant had a son, Henry, born in 1859. Hence these curious particularities. Henry's birth, it will be seen, was just one hundred years after that of his uncle Joseph. Further, if he reach the age of seventy-one—he is now only thirty-four—there will be a period of two hundred years between his age and the birth of his grandfather.

Not long since, at an afternoon party, I met and talked with that clever actor, remarkable for his interpretation of grotesque types, Mr. Cyril Maude. Apart from this special interest, there was yet another more interesting still associated with this class of 'stepping-stones,' and it seemed more strikingly effective than any I had yet encountered. For he was the son of Captain Francis Maude, of the navy, who was born in 1798, and died so recently as 1886. Now, this officer's father was the first Lord Hawarden, born in 1729; while his grandfather—the grandfather, mark, of one who died in 1886—was born in 1673! It is rather startling to think of a person, alive only yesterday, whose grandfather might have seen James II., and have remembered the battle of the Boyne.

Here is a curious and rather romantic coincidence, and one which had also a sort of historical interest. I was once staying in the country at a nobleman's house, attached to which was a fine old Jacobean castle that had a sort of celebrity, and had even figured in one of Sir Walter Scott's romances. During the Parliamentary wars it had been besieged, and gallantly defended by a noble lady, who proved herself a true heroine. The leader of the Cromwellian forces was a stern, grim general, who battered down the walls, and left it, as it now stands, a ruin, picturesque enough.

Among the guests was a pretty, piquant little lady, nearly connected with the writer, and whose 'brightness' gave a charm to the saucy gaiety in which she indulged herself. One morning, turning over the pages of the familiar Burke's 'Peerage,' we chanced to turn to the account of her family, and there read that its founder was Sir H—— S——, this very Parliamentary general, afterwards rewarded with a peerage, and with a large portion of the forfeited estates in Ireland. From him the lady in question was shown to be directly descended, being the daughter of the person who now bore the title. At dinner that

day she was seated next the host, and it seemed an extraordinary coincidence that here should be sitting together the descendants of the old foes—of the grim old Parliament man, and of the lady who had made so gallant a defence.

It often seems to me that we are too incurious in our progress through life, allowing events, incidents, character, to slip past us, without taking the least note of them or of their significance, as though all were 'matters of course.' How commonly, for instance, we hear people talking of having a small acquaintance, of knowing few people, etc.! Yet everyone who is not absolutely a recluse must, in the course of his life, have met quite a small army of persons.

An ingenious member of our family once took the trouble of counting up the number of people we had met, or talked with—acquaintances, in short—and formed a list of, I think, between four and five thousand.

Most of our friends, too, seem to us to depart life in the ordinary 'humdrum' fashion; they have a long or short illness, and then die. It is only when we look back and take 'stock' that we see what a number of tragedies, misfortunes, disasters, casualties, have attended the course of those we

have known. Felicity seems almost to be the exception.

In my own experience, I could give the names of at least a dozen friends who have committed suicide. Of these, three threw themselves out of the window, two cut their throats, two shot themselves. Quite a number have met with violent ends. Two were burnt to death in a railway-accident, another fell out of a window, another was drowned, another set himself on fire going to bed. Others have experienced terrible catastrophes, complete ruin, reverse of fortune, and the like ; while others, again, have been accused of crimes, and have had to stand their trial for their lives.

Once I was at an amateur concert, and in the chorus was singing a gentleman I knew who took great interest in the musical proceedings. I was struck by his restless face and nervous manner. As I found later, he was at that moment under the eyes of those who were already winding round him a chain of evidence of some serious crime. It was a truly tragic situation, with such a secret to be obliged to sing before a crowd, and simulate a state of unconcern. Every society is thus a microcosm, though we are

apt to fancy that the daily newspaper record of misfortunes, casualties, and crime belongs to a world with which we have little or no concern.*

The 'writing-man' is often entertained by the odd humours and half-grotesque business of his trade. Often there is a glimpse of Grub Street itself. One morning a gentleman with a much inflected nose, and a dialect like the traditional tone of Moses in the 'School for Scandal,' was shown in. He had come, he said, on the part of a great firm, to propose what he called a '*liter'y* work.' My name, he said, had been mentioned handsomely to the firm. I was just the person for the thing, and the work was just the thing for me. The plan was entirely in the interests of their customers—a large body scattered over the kingdom. These were provincials, often coming up to town; so the firm conceived the kindly and

* Among other oddities of life, I once experienced the curious sensation of talking with a 'youngish' man, who was at that moment married to his fourth wife. I could not help thinking of Dickens's Bayham Badger and the slight confusion between the three husbands, Captain Swosser, Professor Dingo, and Mr. Badger. Some years later I found myself residing in the same town with an old Admiral who was at that moment enjoying the society of his *fifth* wife!

rather graceful idea that, when these simple folk came to call on them and make their purchases, a nice, well-written guide to the sights and shows of town should be presented to them. 'Observe you,' said my Jewish friend, 'none of your low, catchpenny things, but by a reg'lar liter'y man, and for which the firm will pay well!' 'And what was the firm—its special line?' I asked. On which he named a well-known house in a large furnishing way.

Was it not obvious that this was quite a dif ferent thing from the 'puff direct' or oblique? What harm in Messrs. —— having their little guide-book? 'You see,' said my friend, interpreting my thoughts, 'there's none of *that* 'ere business. No, no; the firm is dealin' with a reg'lar *liter'y* man. Of course, another gent has been arranged for, not *your* sort, but who's on the papers, and who's to give a reg'lar account of the firm, and of our noo warehouses, and of the stuff and all the 'ands we employ. That comes in separately, you know, and has nothing to do with *you*.' 'Oh! *now* I see,' I said. Nothing came of it.

I find a grotesque incident, Pantagruelic almost, which occurred at a ball at which I was

'assisting.' The ball was given, and not without trepidation, by some quiet, homely people who were just starting on their course. It was a great effort. The festival had just commenced; 'Skipper's Band' had cheerfully intoned an early valse. The rooms were beginning to be crowded, when I noticed a commotion in a corner. There were whisperings, and one or two rushed from the room.

I did not pay much attention, but after an interval I—and we all—witnessed this extraordinary spectacle. A lady had been hoisted on a chair, and was being carried by four hired waiters through the room, her face covered with a pocket-handkerchief. Wondering eyes followed this unusual procession, the host, as mild a mannered man as ever took a dowager down to supper, leading and clearing a passage. It was not difficult to read the riddle, especially as the Guido Fawkes-like armchair took its way aloft up to the principal bedroom. It seems the poor lady had made a sad miscalculation.

All pitied her poor hosts, who feebly entreated everyone to proceed just as if nothing had happened. Accordingly the fiddlers struck up once more, but there was a solemn check on the many-

twinkling feet; everyone felt that this noisy revelry might imperil the critical matters that were going on aloft. An hour elapsed, the flirters on the stairs stood aside to make way for a burly man, a professor and D.D., who tramped upstairs, and who had arrived express from the country. On his heels came the doctor post-haste, and we were presently jostled by nurses, apothecaries, etc. Strange mixture! Fiddlers, dancers, doctors, the sufferer.

However, it must be said the sense of responsibility was more and more felt; it became at last too oppressive. It was impossible to take the thing seriously as a ball at all, and so towards one o'clock there was a general stampede, I think to the relief of all. But our amiable host's ball was spoilt. Everything above, however, ended happily. There was something really comic in the situation. The poor ball-givers had their involuntary guest for a fortnight at least.

Few enjoyments, it seems to me, equal that of visiting a cathedral. Once I saw eight cathedrals in a single day! It was on one of my 'multum in parvo' tours, as I call them, and it fell out in this way. At six in the morning I went down to Rochester, breakfasted in the old Bull Inn with

the Pickwick Club, and saw the ballroom upstairs where Jingle and Tupman attended, with other Pickwickian curios. I also visited the old cathedral, whose acquaintance I first made years ago under the guidance of Charles Dickens. Next I passed on to Chatham, where I found out Fort Pitt, and 'the lines' where the review was held. At nine o'clock 'I picked up' the morning express, and crossed over to Calais, where there is a fine church built by the English. We lingered half an hour here, and departed at half-past one. I next halted at Abbeville, and had nearly an hour to study the beautiful front of its cathedral, which seemed like lacework.

We reached Amiens at half-past two, remained there two hours visiting the matchless cathedral, the town-hall, the bishop's palace, and other fine things. At half-past four I set off for Beauvais, which was reached at 6.30, where I was only allowed to remain an hour—quite sufficient time to admire the tall cathedral. By 10.15 I was back again at Amiens, and after wandering about for half an hour surveying the fair town by night, I picked up the Paris express, and was transported once more to Calais. I never tire of the bustling scenes of embarkation, and the arrival of

the different 'international trains' seems never to lose its dramatic interest. By three we were at Dover, and in another hour were flitting by Canterbury, whose cathedral was worth seeing at break of day.

I may add here that the judicious observer will gather much that is entertaining from even the window of his carriage. The grouping of houses, the 'lie' of a town, the sight of a church, is ever suggestive. The view of a place like Canterbury, its tranquil tone of retirement, the fashion in which the church dominates and seems to absorb all the rest, becoming the note of the place, excites the most pleasing thoughts. At the close of a long day's travel in Belgium, we often pass by some forlorn-looking little town, from which rises the copper-coloured belfry of the town-hall, and beside it the sombre church spire. The little town stands solitary, and without suburbs, in the flat country, much as it has stood for centuries. We fly away from it and possibly shall never see it again. The old belfry and spire suggest a curious tone of melancholy solitude. They are, perhaps, the only elements of vitality in the place, and the effect is increased as the tinkling of the chimes is borne towards us.

By six o'clock I was in London once more, having been away just twenty-four hours. The eight cathedrals I had seen were: 1, Westminster; 2, Rochester; 3, Canterbury; 4, Calais; 5, Boulogne; 6, Abbeville; 7, Amiens; 8, Beauvais.

I wish I could give an idea of how much the pleasure of 'seeing things'—whether they be cities or buildings—even the cheap 'sweet simplicity of the streets,' as Elia has it—is enhanced by this quick activity of the mind, and by coming furnished with proper associations. Goethe has pointed to this in his well-known saying, 'At Rome people only see what they carry there.' In this spirit I find novelty wherever I go. Even a newly-erected building excites criticism; it is excellent and pleasing here, a failure there. We would like it in this way or that.

Most people are fond of making holiday excursions to the country; they enjoy 'the change,' or go and look at 'the sights'—the cathedral, the scenery. Now, I love to conjoin such things with something in my reading, or some hobby, even. This gives a colour and a zest.

To show how this line of enjoyment may be

cultivated, I will recount a little excursion made to explore what I call 'Johnson's Land.' Numbers repair to Lichfield to see or 'stare' at the cathedral or at Johnson's house, and after being taken round by the guide, go their way. I make no excuse for extracting from my diary my own account of such a visit, with the view of showing how much can be made of these intellectual excursions. It may suggest the worthy Mrs. Barbauld's 'Eyes and No Eyes.'

At the close of a 'hot and secular day,' as Elia would say, we came into the fair and inviting Derbyshire country. A brisk, good-natured local solicitor, full of extraordinary information of all kinds, had something to tell us about every house that flitted by, of the owners of the old castles, and of antiquities generally. Such pleasant, enthusiastic guides are ever welcome and invaluable to your dramatic traveller. Gradually a sort of sylvan district began to draw near; the softly-swelling hills of Dovedale are seen in the distance; while a low-lying hamlet embosomed in trees, whence rises a tall, elegant, and truly *expressive* spire, comes into view. This is Ashbourne. The entering such tranquil, retired places at

eventide adds a special attraction. There is a tone of pensive and even sad seclusion, as though we were arriving at some 'happy valley.' Crossing a bridge, and passing close by the church, which is almost abbey-like in its appearance, we enter the little High Street, our solicitor pointing out this and that house as we pass along. At the farther end of the street, where it begins to rise towards the hill, a sort of wooden bar, high in the air, stretches across the road, supported on tall posts, making a sort of arch, on the centre of which is perched a huge negro's head; while below it hangs a large framed picture, representing a sportsman, with his dogs, etc. Here we read the legend: 'The Green Man and Black's Head Royal Hotel.' A 'Green Man' in combination with a 'Black's Head' seemed bizarre enough, while the 'Royal' element introduced furthered the perplexity. However, thus it was, and we Boswellian pilgrims looked up with a feeling of interest and veneration. The sturdy Doctor had often trudged under the 'Black Man's Head' as he took his walk from the 'big' house below. We can hear him saying: 'Why, sir, where's the merriment? These signs, sir, all have their significance. There was a French-

man who translated the "Green Man and Still," "*L'homme vert et tranquille.*" And as for the Black's Head, I'd as lief my own head was there as another's!'

This is an ancient inn, relic of the old posting days; very quaint and original, with a great yard and covered archway. It is much as it was a hundred years ago. Round the yard are all sorts of crannies and little doors that open straight into rooms; a snug bar or two, with half a dozen short lengths of stairs, fixed outside, and leading up to overhanging chambers. A stray joint or two hang aloft from hooks, ripening slowly, to which, when dinner is spoken of, our buxom hostess's eyes wandered abstractedly.

'How I love,' said Eugenius, 'these genuine old-fashioned inns, where you are an actual flesh-and-blood person, something real and living, to the good landlady! In such places she knows *you*, and takes an interest in *you*. But at your "Métropoles" you are a mere number, a cipher, perhaps. Now, here they don't even know the meaning of numbers.'

'You are right, Eugenius,' I said with a sigh. 'But here comes Sukey with news of our dinner. How is it getting on, Sukey?'

'*What is your number, please?*' was Sukey's reply. *O nos bon villageois!*

A good country dinner was spread in one of the little rooms that looked out on the courtyard. The fare was good; and as to wine—well, the highest praise that can be given to the country inn is that its intention is good. While we were sitting at the old mahogany table, the 'cloth drawn,' and 'at our wine,' the door was thrown open wide, and our worthy hostess, with an extra state and dignity in her manner, introduced in person the Vicar of the parish. Knowing of our pious quest, he had come up without loss of time to see the strangers. A cheerful, active, off-hand man. He remained with us for a pleasant hour, telling us much that was interesting, and fixing an early hour the following morning when he would meet us at the church gate. This sort of thing has a pleasant old-fashioned flavour.

Attractive as the little hamlet is, on the claim of its own picturesqueness, it has this pleasing association: it is Dr. Johnson's Ashbourne. It was here that his old schoolfellow, Dr. Taylor, Prebendary of Westminster, lived in comfortable ease and state, and was ever ready to welcome his friend. The place is now full of traditions of

this comfortable prebendary, of his friends and enemies.

Dr. Taylor's mansion is a somewhat uninteresting but sound-looking edifice of very red brick, with a portico in front. Though the front is nearly a hundred and thirty years old, it now seems merely old-fashioned. It is occupied by an agreeable family descended from a famous painter, to whom our Vicar brought us, and who gave us a courteous welcome. It was a strange, curious feeling to find one's self in the handsome octagon room described by Boswell, where the dinner was given on the Doctor's birthday, when it was proposed to light up the central chandelier.* This octagon room had been built by Dr. Taylor, and filled the space between the two old wings of the mansion. It is in the rather elegant Italian style then in fashion, with good florid stucco work, in radiating compartments. This, it was said, was owing to the influence of his friends the Boothbys, who were in the neighbourhood. The general old-fashioned air, the painted medallion in the ceiling, the fine ironwork in the railing of

* Our hostess informed me that her predecessor in the tenancy well recalled this very chandelier, which had three rows of lights.

the stairs, and the two stately columns of Derbyshire marble supporting the gallery, were all most pleasing. In the grounds behind, on the left, was a little old-fashioned pavilion, while beyond stretched an expanse of green, formerly the Doctor's park; for this comfortable ecclesiastic used to keep his deer. The narrow river which crosses it has been diverted, and used to run much closer to the garden. By damming up one end the Doctor had made a sort of waterfall; and readers of Boswell will recall the pleasant scene, when Johnson, seizing a pole, tried to clear away the débris, and particularly the dead cat. As our eyes wandered over the ground, the scene appeared to rise before us in the most vivid way. In these gardens the great lexicographer had wandered day after day, getting an appetite for his host's table. I could have lingered on for hours in this agreeable old house, calling up these ghostly memories. In the octagon room I seemed to hear the Doctor violently showing his displeasure at the Ashbourne farming gentleman who had used the profane words 'damned fool' in his presence.

At one side on the first floor, to the right as you face the house, is a one-windowed room of

rather mean aspect, which is pointed out as the one occupied by the Doctor. Another, more pretentious in character, was long exhibited as the one, but the true tradition settled that it was the first. When our Vicar, the Reverend Mr. Jourdain, first arrived many years ago, he found many old persons who preserved the memories of Johnson's host, and even recalled him. He was a very great personage there ; and it was said that if he had taken a dislike to the beautiful spire of the church, and wished it removed, it would have been demolished to please him. He had been at war with Mr. Langley, the master of the Grammar School, which, awkwardly enough, exactly faced Taylor's house on the opposite side of the street. A most charming Elizabethan, many-gabled front it displays—tranquil, unobtrusive, and elegant. The garden rises abruptly behind on the side of a small hill, as described by 'Bozzy.' It is curious, by the way, that there should now be living in the town a Dr. Boswell, whose name, we may trust, is sufficiently appreciated to bring him abundant practice.*

* These odd coincidences often occur. Lately, passing by Clapham, I noted a doctor's brass plate with the name Westwood, which at once recalled Shelley's first wife, who, it will be recollected, was at school at Clapham.

Close beside was the beautiful Ashbourne church, a cathedral in miniature almost, and which is really, as I said, the note of the place. Everything centres in its gently obtrusive and truly elegant spire. The Vicar having unlocked the door, we found ourselves in this most wonderful and original of country churches. It had all the entertainment of going over a small cathedral, so varied and striking were its contents. Johnson, of course, had attended many a Sunday's service, but he must have often wandered pensively through its aisles; for here was the tomb of his much-loved Hill Boothby, to whom he had written, when she was on her deathbed, such touching, loving letters. It was a curious feeling reading her name on the marble tablet. The chancel seems to be filled with recumbent Cockaines, knights and their ladies; rather crowded together, accommodation being scant, but adding to the picturesque effect. 'Look,' says our Vicar; 'stand just here. Now you have a beautiful view of where the aisles intercept; mark the effect of the light!' Rarely have I seen anything so judiciously and thoroughly restored as this church; and our Vicar has in his time raised, and laid out, between thirty and forty

thousand pounds. He was now busy with the elegant spire, which was encompassed by an airy scaffolding ; new stones were being inserted—the whole 'underpinned'—to the tune, or cost, of some four thousand pounds. There was some fine old stained glass and good modern glass. When he came, he found the large expanse of the walls all overgrown and encrusted by layers of thick plaster. These he had carefully cleaned away, exposing the beautiful, highly finished stonework.

We now returned to our 'Green Man,' and noted that all the steps, flagging, etc., of the old inn were garnished in rather curious fashion. When the local Sukey had finished her scouring, we observed she would take a piece of chalk and fancifully decorate the ends with curious devices and flourishes, almost of an Indian pattern : dice, diamonds, etc., like the figures in a kaleidoscope. This curious custom seemed universal, and our Green Man and Black's Head displayed such devices on every available step. I had some conversation with our worthy hostess in her snug bar, and on going away she put into my hands a card, on one side of which was an antique device representing a sportsman firing at a bird which

his dog had just 'set,' and with this inscription:

'Fanny Wallis,
'*Family and Commercial Posting House*,
'*Green Man and Black's Head Hotel*,
'*Ashbourne*,
'*Near Dovedale*.'

On the other side was to be read an extract from Boswell's 'Life of Dr. Johnson,' September, 1771.

It was pleasant, therefore, for Mr. Boswell's biographer and editor to find himself thus unexpectedly treated at parting just as was that pleasant creature himself, and that good Mrs. Wallis should, nigh a hundred and twenty years later, so faithfully cherish the tradition of her visitor. I asked her about Boswell's hostess, Mrs. Killingley, her predecessor. There were no Killingleys now in the place, she said; but when she first came there were, and she knew them very well. And so, having paid our modest bill, taken leave of our hostess and good Vicar, who saw us to the station, we departed from this interesting hamlet, and with regret saw its elegant spire fade in the distance.

A station or two further on we were set down

at Uttoxeter, pronounced in a variety of ways as Utchester, Utoxter, etc., an uninteresting place enough, very rude and undeveloped. In its small triangular market-place a rather grimy drinking-fountain had been set up, but seems decaying away. The natives, adroitly wishing to utilize the Johnsonian legend, had roughly carved on one side an image of a large-headed man, bent down in sorrow. This was intended as a record of the memorable act of penitence performed by the sage on this very spot, when he stood bare-headed, for an hour or more, the object of the loud jeers and wonder of the yokels. As is well known, he wished by this act of self-humiliation to atone for some disobedience to his father, the old Michael. But, as I said, what with the water and neglect, the image has well-nigh mouldered away out of sight. There was nothing here to detain the Boswellians, save, perhaps, a 'rag and bone shop,' as it is called—a disrespectful name for places where old china and other curios may be obtained. The amateur might do worse than explore the country towns regularly; he would be certain to light on something that will be 'in his way,' and at modest figures.

Lichfield is, of course, the official pilgrimage

for all admirers of the good old Doctor. Few places are more thoroughly permeated with the flavour of the Johnsonian legend; and though the ordinary sightseer is satisfied with what is shown in the market-place, there are many more memorials almost more suggestive, and that appeal more forcibly and romantically to the well-skilled visitor. It is pleasing to find that as the *culte* increases the natives are each year beginning to take more and more interest in their great townsman; though, apart from this attraction, the place is charming as a specimen of a cathedral town, from its placid, unsophisticated tone, the sylvan or rural aspect of portions of the town, and the exquisite cathedral, small and elegant as it is, in contrast with some of the other vast and overpowering fanes. There is a placid, old-world tranquillity about the place. We can hear the 'caw-caw' of the rooks very far aloft; and looking up, we see tall trees clustered, and these parsonic birds flying about.

A sense of pensive retrospect comes on us as we stand in the market-place, by the good old Gothic church, where the sage sits perched on his pedestal, and bent down gloomily, as he gazes at the quaint paternal mansion opposite,

now tenantless and somewhat dilapidated. Finding our way to 'The Johnson's Head,' a cheerful-looking bookseller's shop, the proprietor, a pleasant, kindly, enthusiastic man, took us in hand—Alderman Lomax, who had been Mayor of the city. We were first shown his own special 'curios.' This thick, faded Malacca stick, with its heavy ivory top, quite brown with age, is the Doctor's—quite 'Homeric,' as he would have said, from its size. Here was his arm-chair of dark wood, rather light and airy for his bulk. These relics came from Richard Green's museum, which was often visited by Johnson. There was a curious portrait, too, done by some local artist of the time, in a fantastic hat and dress, but a fair likeness. It was painted for a Mr. Wickens, who knew Johnson.

Our Alderman next leads us forth to show us the town, and goes back to fetch the key of the house. It is a fine country day, the air balmy and refreshing for the 'jaded Londoner.' The house is familiar enough from the pictures, with its overhanging front story supported on pillars, and must have been a solid, comfortable, and respectable mansion in its day. In the shop portion, the old, small cross-barred windows had

been taken out, so as better to display the goods. The other windows seem to be just as they were in Johnson's day. It seems in sound, excellent condition, and a short time ago was used as a sort of 'eating-house'—a familiar term that seems in harmony with our ideal of the lexicographer. 'Dr. Johnson Coffee House and Dining Rooms, Market Place, Lichfield. This house is famous as the birthplace of Dr. Johnson. Visitors to Lichfield will find every accommodation for making a short or long stay, and every attention to their comfort. Hot dinners daily from twelve till two. Dinners and teas for private parties and schools. Terms on application to Mrs. Till, proprietress. Well-aired beds.' Mrs. Till has gone, and her kitchens have grown cold. Who will be its next occupant is hard to speculate; but we should most relish that our host and guide of 'The Johnson's Head' should at once transfer his business, with the chair and stick, to the place.

On the elevated ground to the left of the Cathedral, among the trees, we find the Bishop's Palace—a pleasing, stately old building, well rusted, of Jacobean pattern. A modern bishop, when he came to reside there, added two clumsy

wings projecting forward, which have spoilt the old engaging effect. It was difficult not to look on it with interest, as it was here that Johnson's early patron, Gilbert Walmesley, used to reside, and here also took place the little children's plays, 'got up' by the young Garrick, at which Johnson used to assist. Later came that *précieuse* Miss Seward and her father. The house in which Garrick's father lived when he was quartered here, I believe no longer stands.

A charming walk by a sort of reservoir leads out of the town to Stow Hill, which is seen about a quarter of a mile off, with its clustered trees, from which peeps out the old house where Mrs. Gastrell used to live. Beside it is one of the ancient church towers, of which there are several in Lichfield. In one of the cross streets we find a spacious old posting-inn, The George, roomy and comfortable, a capacious archway in the centre, which in the old days led into the yard. It has a somewhat architectural air, with its row of Grecian pillars. It is still the 'Family, Commercial, and Posting House.' We find a substantial lunch laid out, in permanence, as it were, in the good old style, for all who may choose to come, with sound Lichfield ale. This,

as is known, is the old 'Beaux' Stratagem' inn, whose proprietor and ale are introduced into Farquhar's comedy. It may be said that everything in this good old town has a certain keeping, and is suited to its august Johnsonian legends. At The George they keep a visitors' book, which is garnished with facetious comments, versicles, and the like. I don't know whether these lines are an old common-form—

> 'I came for change and rest;
> The waiter took the change,
> The landlord took the rest.'

Returning to the house in Market Place, we find beside it another old inn of even greater interest—The Three Crowns—where Johnson and his follower stayed a few days on their visit to Lichfield. The description 'Bozzy' gives of their doings is vivid, and the fashion in which he has caught the 'local colour' is very striking. We almost seem to be staying there with him. The excellent Cork takes care to remind his customers of this visit. 'Three Crowns Hotel, Lichfield. Proprietor, J. T. Cork. Good accommodation for visitors. Special terms for large parties. Wines, spirits and cigars of the choicest quality. "N.B.—We put up at the Three Crowns, not

one of your great inns, but a good old-fashioned one" (*Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson*). The celebrated arm-chair used by the great Dr. Johnson is still in its old position.' The Three Crowns is not so ambitious in its aims as The George, but the obliging Mr. Cork rather good-naturedly favoured our enthusiasm, though apparently without feeling much of it himself. According to the old jest, he allowed himself to be 'drawn.' The room in which the sacred chair was placed was very much as it was a century ago, with semicircular bench for drawing close to the fire, with a strange air of old fashion.

Thus had we explored Lichfield—that pleasant city. By the end of the day we seemed to be on familiar terms with 'Mrs. Cobb' and 'Mrs. Gastrell,' Lucy Porter, and the rest. We can enjoy our 'Bozzy' with a greater zest and vitality, as it were, after visiting the localities; the dry bones begin to live. And thus completing our two days' pilgrimage, we return to town. I may say, in conclusion, that this sort of expedition with an object in view, and prompted by a little enthusiasm, adds prodigiously to the enjoyment. You do not go from point to point foolishly staring, and wondering why you stare. The old

monuments speak to you. You become for the time a denizen of the place, and find friends and helpers, as we did in our Vicar.

At one time I used to follow the law as a profession; that is to say, for many years I regularly attended at the 'Four Courts' at Dublin, at which handsome, imposing building, by the way, some seven or eight courts hold their sittings. At the proper seasons I used to go to the northern circuit, to Belfast and other cities. (It will be seen I lapse occasionally into these unimportant biographical details, but it is with a view of introducing something interesting.) After some years' 'practice'—as it can be styled only by a complimentary stretch—I was given a small official post, that of assistant 'Crown Prosecutor,' who was called in to assist his learned brethren in all criminal cases of importance. This was an easy, agreeable, and often profitable function. The leading Crown Counsel was an astonishing old gentleman, well on the way to ninety, a really 'grand old man,' who discharged his duties wonderfully well, considering. He was indeed an interesting personage. He had sat in the old Irish Parliament, played the violoncello with

enthusiasm, and thought little of walking fourteen or fifteen miles. He would, indeed, walk the whole way between the circuit towns. He was a fine specimen of the old school, most gentlemanly in his 'style' and manners, courteous and considerate. He had a good estate of his own, and a handsome place. Such was Sir Thomas Staples, Bart., Q.C., and he was much regretted at his death.

Every barrister knows how many criminal cases, of a most dramatic kind, fall within his experience. These he will be glad to recount to the curious at great length—perhaps without conveying to his hearers any dramatic impression—owing to his professional way of setting out the case. It requires some practice in writing, and in the art of grouping the incidents, to produce an effect. I took part in a good many of these sensational cases, as they are called. But there was one very striking murder, the perpetrator of which was tried several times before a verdict could be obtained. Before the close it began to exercise a sort of morbid fascination on me, and I drew up an account of it for Mr. Dickens's journal. I think it will be found interesting here. It was called

THE FATAL WATCH.

At a pretty spot in the North of Ireland, some three or four miles out of the county of Belfast, a romantic river called the Lagan takes a graceful bend. One of its banks, a sort of plateau, spreads out in undulations ; the other lies quite flat. To the left it is crossed by a white bridge, which forms part of the highroad, while to the right it turns the corner with a gentle sweep. This highroad leads up a little hill to where a few white cottages are seen dotted here and there, mixed with some clumps of trees ; the place bears the name of the village of Miltown. Outside runs the highroad, which joins the other road that crosses the white bridge, and takes the voyager on to Belfast or Lisburn. This little bird's-eye view of the locality and its relations is necessary to understand this curious history of the Fatal Watch.

In one of the few white cottages on the hill at Miltown lived a respectable family of the sturdy yeoman order. To this race belonged the Wilgar family, and one of the sons, bearing the name of Charles, was in the habit of coming down every Monday morning from the white cottages on the hill, crossing the bridge, and working the whole week at a place of business a couple of miles

away. To save time and trouble, he stayed with his uncle's family during the time, and came home every Saturday night to his white cottage.

Up at Miltown, also, in another of the white cottages, dwelt a rude low-browed shock-headed fellow, with his wife, bearing the name of Ward. This Ward was, in fact, the Thomas Idle, or idle apprentice, of the district; Charles Wilgar, the industrious apprentice, was, curious to say, his friend and companion.

It is well known to students of our nature what a symbol of respectability is to be found in so simple a thing as a silver watch. A local watchmaker, sensible of this secret spring in humanity, set on foot the project of a watch-club. The terms were five shillings a week for twenty weeks, with a lottery every Saturday night, when a watch would be drawn for. The Industrious apprentice had very soon paid all his instalments, and was presently complete owner of a silver watch; the Idle apprentice paid a few instalments fitfully and irregularly, but was lucky enough to draw a watch early. With possession, he thought no more of payments—became a defaulter—and on the earliest opportunity conveyed his prize to the pawnbroker's of the district, whence it was

redeemed by direction of the society. It happened to be rather a better article than the watch which had fallen to the lot of the Industrious apprentice, and Thomas Idle, who had now lost his watch and his instalments, presently discovered that it was being carried about in the pocket of his more fortunate friend. Among the lower and viler natures, it is well known what a morbid and unreasonable effect a transaction of this description produces: what a brooding sense of injury, coupled with an idea of being unlawfully deprived of what they called their own property, settles on them, and grows almost into a disease.

It also fell out about this date, that the Idle apprentice Ward was more than usually unlucky in his general enterprises, and unfortunate in other transactions besides that of his watch. He had married, and yet would not work, and had taken to prowling about honest districts.

It now came to a Saturday evening in the month of May. The ill-favoured Idle apprentice was again at his uncle's cottage. This time he was on a friendly errand. Both lived up on the hill, at the white cottages on the other side of the Lagan; their way lay in the same direction, and they might walk home together. Just

before starting, the uncle called his nephew privately into the back kitchen, and there entrusted him with a borrowed watch, which he was to take home and restore to another member of the family living at Miltown. This he put into his fob ; but he carried the other—the fatal watch—in his waistcoat-pocket, conspicuous by a chain.

It was about half-past six. It had been a beautiful day, and the evening was closing in tranquilly. They took their way, first, along the highroad for a hundred yards or so, during which short span a neighbour coming home met them, and wished them God-speed. Another neighbour standing at his door saw the pair pass by, and watched them out of sight ; for at the end of this scrap of highroad they took a sharp turn to the left, and struck into the green fields, making for the river. That unconcerned neighbour watching them out of sight, of all things in the world, had least in his thoughts that the low-browed, slouching fellow carried at that moment in his breast-pocket a huge round stone, smooth as a cannon-ball, neatly tied up in the end of a pocket-handkerchief—a simple yet fearful instrument of destruction. The last thing, too, he could have thought of on that Saturday night, as he turned

into his cottage again, was that he would never see that good yeoman Wilgar alive again. The rest of that 'dark night's work' was dovetailed together long afterwards. Many tongues joined in telling the story. Another neighbour wandering home across those green fields met the low-browed man walking away from the southward—that is, in a direction which would lead him to a large linen town, a few miles away. This, he remembered, was at about half-past seven o'clock.

The scene now changes to a town of linen, Lisburn—of a Saturday night; streets full, shops open, and the thick manufacturing miscellany pouring through, busy with the night's work. A smart flashy girl had driven in with her sister on the family cart, and, among other functions, had to visit a pawnbroker in Bow Lane, bearing the significant name of Gamble. In the street, lurking about dubiously, she came upon an old acquaintance, his dull, heavy features lighted up by a gas-lamp. This proved to be Thomas Idle, who greeted her in a friendly way. Possibly he was an ancient admirer. He pulled out a silver watch, and was very anxious that she should take it to the pawnbroker of the significant name. By the lamplight a strange short dialogue followed,

the smart flashy girl wishing, with female curiosity, to reach to the whole history of the transaction. He tells her that the watch belongs to many masters, shifting the names. Finally, he breaks out with the real ownership, and confesses that it is the Industrious apprentice's own watch. The flashy girl then boldly declines any meddling with the business. 'What are you afraid of?' says Thomas Idle, with a blind infatuation scarcely paralleled in homicidal annals; 'of Charles Wilgar? He will never tell of it, for *he is lying in the Lagan.*' Scarcely comprehending the force of this strange confession, she went her way.

Later on, the scene changes once more to the murky crowded tabernacle of the pawnbroker with the significant name; the private stalls are crowded with a copious yet dingy congregation; the offerings of the faithful are abundant, yet not to be scrutinized too nicely. Hither, presently, repairs our low-browed Idle apprentice, his fatal watch in his hand, to ensure for himself the truth of the warning that the wages of sin is death!

It is wonderful how in general incidents of this sort are recovered from the common mind. The next ebb of the tide, it would be expected, should sweep away all such vestiges, as hours, minutes,

and this or that man wearing this or that dress. There were women there, all busy with what seems to be the chronic Saturday night's work, of bringing and taking away household goods. Yet they had time, by some liveliness of observation fatal to our Idle apprentice, to take note of him and his fatal watch. One remembered distinctly a strange man, in a Glengarry cap, bargaining about the price, and recollected the sum handed over eventually to the strange man in the Glengarry cap. Another knew him personally, and took note of watch, Glengarry cap, and price. Even the flashy girl, who chanced to be in the shop, either from suspicion or on private business of her own, heard the whole transaction. Finally, the proprietor, Gamble, had his ledger, or pawn chronicle, wherein was set out price and number of watch, with fictitious name, which name the women had heard the strange man in the Glengarry cap giving in.

That night he was seen and spoken with in many roads and places, wandering hither and thither, like a guilty spectre. And the family up at the little white cottages dotted on the hill at Miltown wondered that their son did not come home, never dreaming that he was but a hundred

yards or so from their own door, lying in the damp bed of the Lagan, with his skull frightfully battered in, and the round stone and handkerchief lying beside him. And so that day ended.

In the morning, a Sunday-school girl, tripping home, looked in at the home of the Idle apprentice, and found him at his fire, washing his feet. Later in the day she came again, and found him walking up and down, jingling money merrily in his pocket, so that his wife, who was by, actually called out with a sort of horror: 'Good God! how did you come by that money?' He then sat down by the fire and got the Sunday-school girl to take a thorn out of his wrist with a needle. A fact in itself but of indifferent importance, as a point of evidence, but not without a connection with the fact that, at the bank over the spot where the body was to be found hereafter, and only there, was a bush of brambles with thorns of the same sort.

Suspicion now became justly excited. Inquiries began to be made, and with no satisfactory result. Marks of a struggle were discovered on the bank; these led to the river being dragged; and the body of the hapless Industrious apprentice was at last found and brought to the bank.

The whole of the back of the skull was terribly shattered; suitable result, indeed, from a blow of the fearful instrument found near him—the smooth round stone tied up so neatly in the sling handkerchief. This handkerchief was shown to have been given to the wretched murderer, long before, by the flashy girl—a sort of sweetheart's present, which she recognised by a rent in it which she herself had mended with her needle and thread.

All things, therefore, pointed to the Idle apprentice with irresistible force. He had been seen going to the water in company with the murdered man; he had been seen coming away alone; the minutes had all been balanced and accounted for. The time before and after the bloody deed had been calculated to a nicety; the distance fitted exactly with the times. And yet there was one thing wanting—the exact moment when the deed itself was done. That, a dumb witness was found to prove. Another fatal watch, which the wicked Idle apprentice little thought would ever testify against him, was in the pocket of the deceased when he was flung down from the bank into the Lagan waters—the watch which was given privately in the kitchen. In a few

seconds the water had reached the works, and it stopped, with the hands pointing to *a quarter past seven!* The two watches played the part of avenging furies, and brought the murderer to the condemned cell.

And here I bring to a close these somewhat discursive ramblings. I can only repeat that my object has been to prove that for 'the contemplative man' there is going on before him a never-ending 'show'—the curtain is always up—which is sure to supply him with thought and entertainment. Even trifles can be made interesting and dramatic; and, without looking for sermons in stones, we have been assured, on high authority, that we can find books in the running brooks and amusement in everything—above all, in the trifles of our lives.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR'S WRITINGS.

I FANCY the following list will be perused with a little surprise: for it exhibits an amount of literary labour that, as I think, no one of our time can match. But quantity, alas! does not imply quality, and no one is more conscious than I am of the shortcomings in this mass of writing. I may say, however, that in nearly every instance I have written because I had something to write, and perhaps because I was impelled to write. The variety of subjects will be noted, comprising almost as many categories as were enumerated by the worthy old Polonius.

(1) DOWN AMONG THE DUTCHMEN. A series of travelling papers in *All the Year Round*. 1857.

(2) ROMAN CANDLES. 1 vol. Chapman and Hall, 1861. A long series of sketches in *All the Year Round*, written of set purpose to make everything appear comic.

(3) THE NIGHT MAIL; ITS PASSENGERS, AND HOW THEY FARED. 1 vol. John Maxwell and Co. 1862. From *All the Year Round*.

(4) The Woman with the Yellow Hair, and other Modern Mysteries, chiefly from *Household Words*. 1 vol. Saunders, Otley and Co. 1862.

(5) Mildrington the Barrister. A romance. 2 vols. Saunders, Otley and Co. 1863.

(6) Second edition. Bentley. 1864.

(7) The Story of the Incumbered Estates Court (from *All the Year Round*). 1 vol. Saunders, Otley and Co. 1862.

(8) The Rev. Alfred Hoblush and his Curacies. A memoir. 1 vol. John Maxwell and Co. 1863. From *All the Year Round*. ('You cannot give us too much of Hoblush,' wrote the Editor.)

(9) Another cheaper edition.

(10) The Henwitchers. A farce. 1863. Performed at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, also at the Vaudeville.

(11) Bella Donna; or, The Cross before the Name. A romance. By 'Gilbert Dyce.' 2 vols. R. Bentley. 1864.

(12) Second edition.

(13) Also a third edition, in 1 vol.

(14) Laurence Sterne. 2 vols. Chapman and Hall. 1864. (A new edition is being prepared.)

(15) 'Le Sport' at Baden. A picture of watering place life and manners, with an illustration. 1 vol. Chapman and Hall. 1864.

(16) Never Forgotten. 3 vols. Chapman and Hall. 1865.

(17) Second edition. 1 vol.

(18) A third in Railway Library form. (The title of this story was given to it by Dickens.)

(19) A Famous Forgery; being the Story of the unfortunate Dr. Dodd. 1 vol. Chapman and Hall. 1865. With illustrations. Now very scarce.

(20) Fairy Alice. 2 vols. R. Bentley. 1865. A collection of stories.

(21) Charles Townshend, Wit and Statesman. 1 vol. R. Bentley. 1866.

(22) The Second Mrs. Tillotson. A story from *All the Year Round*. 3 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1866.

(23) A second edition.

(24) A third in 1 vol. Also a fourth Railway edition.

(25) Charles Lamb: his Friends, his Haunts, and his Books. 1 vol. R. Bentley. 1866. With illustrations by the late Henry Doyle, C.B.

(26) Jenny Bell (a sequel to 'Bella Donna'). 3 vols. R. Bentley. 1866.

(27) Polly: a Village Portrait. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1867.

(28) An edition in 1 vol.

(29) Seventy-five, Brooke Street. 3 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1867.

(30) Another edition, in 1 vol. ('Bella Donna,' 'Jenny Bell,' and 'Seventy-five, Brooke Street,' 8 vols. in all, made one story, devoted to the career of 'Jenny Bell.')

(31) School Days at Saxonhurst. By 'One of the Boys.' 1 vol. A. and C. Black. 1867. (An account of school-life at the Jesuit College of Stonyhurst.)

(32) A fourth edition.

(32*a*) The Life of David Garrick, from original family papers and numerous published and unpublished sources. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1868. (This book has become very scarce, and fetches a high price. A new edition in one volume has been prepared and printed, but owing to legal difficulties cannot be published. There have been many 'Grangerised' copies of this life.)

(33) The Dear Girl. 3 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1868. From *All the Year Round*.

(34) Diana Gay; or, The History of a Young Lady. 3 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1868. From the *Belgravia*.

(35) Proverbs and Comediettas. Written for private representations (with an essay on amateur acting). 1 vol. Strahan and Co. 1869. (Many of these pieces have since been produced on the public stage.)

(36) Autobiography of a Small Boy. By the author of 'School Days at Saxonhurst.' 1 vol. Sampson Low, Son and Marston. 1869. (Genuine recollections, and but slightly decorated.)

(37) Fatal Zero. A diary kept at Homburg. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1869.

(38) A new edition, in 1 vol. Chatto and Windus.

(39) Also a popular edition. 1 vol. 1886. (Much praise of this book will be found in Dickens's letters. After a long interval, my friend Walter Pollock wished me to have it reprinted, which was done accordingly.)

(40) Principles of Comedy and Dramatic Effect. 1 vol. Tinsley Brothers. 1870.

(41) The Loves of Famous Men. A serial in the *Belgravia*.

(42) Beauty Talbot. 3 vols. R. Bentley. 1870. A serial in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

(43) The Kembles. An account of the Kemble family, including the lives of Mrs. Siddons and her brother, John Philip Kemble. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. By some odd oversight undated.

(44) The Sword of Damocles. Serial in *Once a Week*. 1871.

(45) Players of Our Day. Series of dramatic portraits in *Tinsley's Magazine*. 1871.

(46) Two Fair Daughters. A novel. 3 vols. Hurst and Blackett. 1871. (Dickens gave this story the name of 'The Doctor's Mixture,' not, it seems to me, one of his happy selections.)

(47) 'The Bridge of Sighs.' Serial in *All the Year Round*. 1871.

(47*a*) My Uncle Toby. Arranged from 'Tristram Shandy'

(in the Bayard series). 1 vol. Sampson Low. 1871.

(48) The William Simpson. A farce performed at the Olympic Theatre. (Lacy's acting edition.) Samuel French. 1871.

(49) Handbook to the National Portrait Gallery at Dublin. Third thousand. Exhibition Palace. 1872.

(50) The Middle-aged Lover. A story. 2 vols. R. Bentley. 1873. From *All the Year Round*, where it was named by C. Dickens the Younger, 'Notes or Gold.'

(51) Life and Adventures of Alexander Dumas. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1873.

(52) The Romance of the English Stage. 2 vols. Bentley. 1874.

(53) The Life of Samuel Johnson. By James Boswell. A reprint of the first edition, to which are added Mr. Boswell's corrections and additions issued in 1792; the variations of the second edition, with some of the author's notes prepared for the third; the whole edited with new notes by Percy Fitzgerald. 3 vols. Bickers. 1874. With a dedication to Carlyle.

(54) Josephine's Troubles. A serial story in the *Month*. 1875.

(55) Boswell and Croker's Boswell. 1 vol. Chapman and Hall. 1876.

(56) The Great Canal at Suez. Its political, engineering and financial history, with an account of the struggles of its projector, Ferdinand de Lesseps. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1876. The great projector himself sent me papers and materials for this book.

(57) The Parvenu Family; or, Phœbe, Girl and Wife. 3 vols. R. Bentley and Son. 1876.

(58) The Life, Letters, and Writings of Charles Lamb. Edited with notes and illustrations. 6 vols. Moxon and Co. 1876. Also a new issue.

(58*a*) Loved and Lost. The Christmas story of the *Illustrated London News*. 1877.

(59) The Little Stranger. A serial in *Cassell's Magazine*. Illustrated. 1878.

(60) Little Dorinda: who Won and who Lost her. 1 vol. Burns and Oates. 1878. A Christmas annual.

(61) The Cock and other Fleet Street Taverns. A note. Chatto and Windus. 1881.

(62) The Life of George IV., including his letters and opinions, with a view of the men, manners, and politics of his reign. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1881. (The whole edition was subscribed for before publication.)

(63) An edition published by the Harpers in America.

(64) Young Celebs. 3 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1881.

(65) The Spectral Ship. A poetical drama, founded on the legend of 'The Flying Dutchman.' 1881.

(66) Letters to a Grand Old Man. Tinsley Brothers. 1881.

(67) A second and third edition.

(68) Letters to my Son Herbert. (Hair-splitting as a fine art.) 1 vol. Tinsley Brothers. 1882. Fourth thousand.

(69) A New History of the English Stage, from the Restoration to the Liberty of the Theatres, in connection with the Patent Houses, from original papers in the Lord Chamberlain's Office, the State Papers Office, etc. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1882. This work is valuable on account of the patents and other documents now first printed or collected.

(70) The Book of Theatrical Anecdotes. 1 vol. George Routledge and Sons.

(71) The Royal Dukes and Princesses of the Family of George III. A view of Court life and manners for

seventy years, 1760—1830. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1882.

(72) Recreations of a Literary Man; or, Does Writing Pay? 2 vols. Chatto and Windus. 1882.

(73) Also an edition in one volume. (This work has been largely read, and not merely by aspirant authors. It has also brought me an immense correspondence. In America there was reprinted separately the portion dealing with writing, as a sort of *vade mecum* for authors. There is much about Dickens in it.)

(74) Three Years' Blunders. Defeat and Retreat—Letter from Joseph to William. Tinsley Brothers. 1883. Second edition.

(75) The Kilmainham Treaty; or, Lessons in Massacre —of the Truth. By the author of 'Letters to my Son Herbert.' Tinsley Brothers. 1883.

(76) Kings and Queens of an Hour. Records of love, romance, oddity, and adventure. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1883.

(77) The Life and Times of William IV., including a view of social life and manners during his reign. 2 vols. Tinsley Brothers. 1884.

(78) The Lady of Brantome. The Christmas number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. 1884.

(79) Another edition in one volume.

(79*a*) Strange Secrets. Told by Conan Doyle, Percy Fitzgerald, and others. 1 vol. Chatto and Windus.

(80) Puppets. A romance. 3 vols. Chapman and Hall. 1884.

(80*a*) Talks at Hawarden. 1 vol. Tinsley Brothers. 1884.

(80*b*) The Art of the Stage. A selection of Lamb's dramatic essays, with a commentary. 1 vol. Remingtons.

(81) More Letters to my Son Herbert. Tinsley Brothers. Second edition.

(82) LIVES OF THE SHERIDANS. With four illustrations. 2 vols. R. Bentley and Son. 1886.

(83) TOPSIDE AND TURVEY. (Tillotson's shilling fiction.) 1 vol. George Routledge and Sons.

(84) A DAY'S TOUR: a journey through England, France, and Belgium (in thirty hours). Chatto and Windus. 1887. (This rather surprising adventure was first related in the *Daily News;* next at greater length in one of the magazines; then in the *St. James's Gazette;* and finally appeared in the above form, with illustrations of my own. I have also delivered it as a lecture, with lantern slides, at the London Institution and in the country.)

(84*a*) LONDON: a collection of tales, poems, etc. By Bayle Bernard, Percy Fitzgerald, and others. 1 vol.

(85) THE OLD PARLIAMENTARY HAND. A letter to Lord W——n. By the author of 'Letters to my Son Herbert.' Hatchards. 1887.

(86) MRS. ABINGTON. In the 'Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States.' Cassell and Co.

(87) THE BOOK FANCIER; OR, THE ROMANCE OF BOOK-COLLECTING. 1 vol., small quarto. Sampson Low and Marston. 1887.

(87*a*) A second edition. (Also a large-paper edition, limited to 250 copies.)

(88) CHRONICLES OF BOW STREET POLICE OFFICE. With an account of the magistrates, 'runners,' and police, and a selection of the most interesting cases. And numerous illustrations. 2 vols. Chapman and Hall. 1888. (I one day purchased for £2, at a second-hand bookseller's, a number of prints, cuttings, etc., on this subject, and I fashioned them into the above.)

(89) THE JEWELS OF THE MASS. (The Jewel series.) Fifth edition. Burns and Oates. 1887.

(90) Watts-Phillips, Artist and Dramatist. Written in conjunction with Miss Emma Watts-Phillips, the dramatist's sister. 1 vol. 188–.

(90*a*) Lives of the Managers. A series in *The Theatre*. (To be completed.)

(91) The Life of John Wilkes, Lord Mayor of London and Chamberlain. 2 vols. Ward and Downey. 1888.

(91*a*) Apology for the Life of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P. 1 vol. Ward and Downey. 1884. (A satirical account of the eminent politician from his youth.)

(92) The Life of Samuel Johnson. By Boswell, etc. Second edition, with a preface by the editor, and a Boswell bibliography by H. R. Tedder, F.S.A., librarian to the Athenæum Club. 3 vols. Swan Sonnenschein, Lowry and Co. 1888.

(93) The Life of Mrs. Catherine Clive. 1 vol., quarto. 1888.

(94) Catholic Jewels from Shakespeare. (The Jewel series.) Burns and Oates. 1889.

(95) Eucharistic Jewels. (The Jewel series.) Burns and Oates. 1889.

(96) King Theodore of Corsica. One of the series 'People who have made a Noise in the World.' With a portrait and other engravings. Vizetelly and Co. 1890.

(97) Words for the Worldly; or, Scriptural Jewels. (The Jewel series.) Burns and Oates. 1890.

(97*a*) Another edition.

(98) Rejected Addresses. By H. and J. Smith. Edited, with an introduction and notes. 1 vol. Pickering and Chatto. 1890.

(99) The Art of Acting: in connection with the study of character, the spirit of comedy, and stage illusion. With a portrait of Frederic Lemaître. 1 vol. Swan

Sonnenschein and Co. 1892. (A lecture delivered at the Royal Institution.)

(100) Pictures of Schoolboy Life and Boyhood. Selected from the best authors. 1 vol. Cassell and Co. Eighth thousand. 1893.

(101) Three Weeks at Mopetown. 1 vol. Henry and Co. 1891.

(102) Life of James Boswell (of Auchinleck), with an account of his sayings, doings, and writings. With four portraits. 2 vols. Chatto and Windus. 1891.

(103) Picturesque London. With numerous illustrations. 1 vol., quarto. Ward and Downey. 1890.

(104) Music-Hall-Land. Illustrated by Alfred Bryan. Ward and Downey.

(105) Taper to Tadpole. A letter on the present position of the Gladstonian party. 1891.

(106) The History of Pickwick. An account of its characters, localities, allusions, and illustrations; with a bibliography. 1 vol. Chapman and Hall, Limited. 1891.

(107) Editing à la Mode. An examination of Dr. Birkbeck Hill's new edition of Boswell's 'Life of Johnson.' Ward and Downey. 1891.

(108) More Editing à la Mode.

(109) Further Examination, etc.

(110) An Examination of Dr. B. Hill's Edition of Johnson's Letters.

(111) Further Examination of Ditto.

(112) Memoirs of Charles Lamb. By Sir T. Noon Talfourd. Edited and annotated by Percy Fitzgerald. With portraits. 1 vol. W. Gibbings. 1892. (A reissue of a portion of my former edition.)

(113) The Story of Bradshaw's Guide. 1 vol. Field and Tuer. 1892.

(114) The Layman's Day. (The Jewel series.) Burns and Oates. 1892.

(115) The Bachelor's Dilemma, and Other Stories. Railway and General Automatic Company. 1892.

(116) London City Suburbs. Dedicated to her Majesty. With 300 illustrations by T. Lukes, jun. 1 vol., quarto. Leadenhall Publishing Company. 1893.

(117) Henry Irving; or, Twenty Years at the Lyceum. 1 vol. Chapman and Hall. 1893.

(118) Memoirs of an Author. 2 vols. With portrait. R. Bentley and Son. 1894.

(119) The Savoy Opera and the Savoyards. With many illustrations. 1 vol. Chatto and Windus. 1894.

(120) Thespian Cartes. A review of the stage during the past twenty years. (In the press.)

(121) Stonyhurst Memories. A serial, in the *Month*. 1893.

(122) Thoughts on 'The Imitation.' 1894. (Preparing for publication.)

(123) New Tales from Shakespeare.

A total of over two hundred volumes. Besides this, there are the contributions to innumerable magazines, which would fill volumes.

THE END.

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